University of Alberta

# Educational Leadership Possibilities in a Site Based Management/Site Based Decision-Making Milieu

by

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# Dedication

To Dr. David Blades for lighting the fire.

To Dr. Terry Carson for keeping the fire burning.

To Debbie, Janelle, Trevor and Ashley for their love, devotion and steadfast support of my journey.

# Abstract

## Educational Leadership Possibilities in an Site Based Management/Site Based Decision-Making Milieu

The goals of school improvement, effectiveness and accountability broaden the debate regarding the provision of a better quality of education to students, and in so doing pose significant challenges to educational leadership in a decentralized milieu. This research is an exploration of the possibility of educational leadership in such a setting.

Four principals and a Canadian Superintendent encounter transformational leadership by engaging in a collaborative action research project. The research partners immersed themselves in professional conversation and reflection on the possibilities and new ways of seeing and envisioning leadership. Central to this study was the emergence of the tensions of lived experience as principals wrestled with the challenges of decentralized decision-making, while immersed in a world dominated by the language of accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

Decentralization places enormous pressure to make schools more effective, efficient and accountable squarely on the principal's shoulders. This research argues that the lists of effective leadership practices related to effective schools research is too narrow, as leadership in a decentralized milieu is far more complex.

This qualitative research is informed by Gadamer's philosophic and moderate hermeneutics that relates conversation to questioning as a way arriving at a deeper understanding of effectiveness through the disclosure of meaning. It involved several layers of interpretation beginning with the participants' conversational interpretation of their expectations and moving to more technical and moderate interpretations of the

conversational texts by the researcher. The resulting interpretations opened up new possibilities of being through the exploration of alternative views of leadership that counter the impact of the current overemphasis on the technical and the bureaucratic. In so doing, the action research process enabled the formulation of new procedures that took into account those features of an environment that is essentially human and that speak to issues of emotion, value, and identity.

This dissertation is both a description of the researchers' unfolding personal journey, and a record of the research participants' shared exploration of a deeper self-understanding such that there was the potential for personal and professional transformation.

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# CHAPTER I

## Understanding the Influences on Leadership Practice

The goals of school improvement, effectiveness and accountability have been with us for many years. These goals have been applied by a generation of educators and others to schools in order to further the debate regarding the provision of a better quality of education to children. Sometimes the debate has been in response to challenges about practice, content, and ideas from within education, while at other times it has been the result of external pressures like decreasing funding for education "in the face of government deficits and taxpayer resistance to increasing taxes" (Jacka, 1999, p. 1).

To achieve the goals of educational reform the public school system has undergone many attempts at reform and restructuring. Every attempt at reform and restructuring is invested with its own particular philosophy, ideology or agenda. In *Better By Design? A Consumer's Guide to Schoolwide Reform* Traub (1999) stated:

> Schools by their very nature are expressions of beliefs, and philosophers have been devising ideal schools since the time of Plato. In the 1920s ... John Dewey created not only a school but an entire movement based on his progressive vision of pedagogy and child development.... James Comer's School Development Program and Siegfried Engelmann's Direct Instruction pedagogy date from the late Sixties; Ted Sizer began forming the Coalition of Essential Schools in 1984. And whole-school reform, as a movement or a self-conscious species of change, is newer still. It may be dated quite precisely, to April, 1991, when President George Bush announced the creation of a private-sector body called the New American Schools Development Corporation (NAS), which was expressly intended to foster the creation of new kinds of schools. (p. 2)

Ungerleider (2003) added to this by stating, "For too long, the changes that have been introduced in public schools have been driven by ideology, fad, and fashion" (p. 276).

Townsend (1998) pointed out that in regard to educational reform in Alberta, the Ministry of Education's agenda reflects an ideology of control. He stated that the ideology of control is clearly manifested in the School Authorities Accountability policy, which:

> clearly gave the Ministry more effective ways of curtailing the bargaining power of the Alberta Teachers' Association (A.T.A.) and a way of exercising more centralized control over the operations of school boards, particularly those in the larger urban centers and those that were increasingly less able to resist the bargaining tactics of the A.T.A. Fiscal control and accountability were seen as necessary prerequisites to the improvements in teaching and learning that, it was assumed, would soon follow. (p. 30)

In 1995 the Ontario Government embarked on "a challenging plan for education reform" designed to "improve the quality of education, to improve funding to the classroom and to improve accountability to students, parents and taxpayers" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 1). Approximately one year later, Saskatchewan Education (1996) distributed *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students*. The document was designed to generate discussion and to be a foundation for hearings on public education.

### Questioning the intent of educational reform and restructuring

Regardless of the stated reasons for such discussions or reforms, Barlow and Robertson (1994) and Harrison and Kachur (1999) believed that they were ideologically driven. Barlow and Robertson (1994) stated that

> the basis of these reforms is neither pedagogical nor fiscal, but ideological and political, consistent with the ultraconservative beliefs about the role of government (as small as possible), the role of the private sector (as large as possible) and a deregulated marketplace. (p. 214)

For their part, Harrison and Kachur (1999) indicated, "education restructuring in Alberta has been and continues to be *ideologically* driven" [italics added] (p. xiv). The significance of these ideologically driven reforms emerges when it is understood that in the case of Alberta, it is the first province to "frontally attack the notion of equality of opportunity, replacing it with New Right policies redefining 'opportunity' according to a new logic – competition, effectiveness, and standards – and to emphasize choice, vocationalism, and marketization" (Harrison & Kachur, 1999, p. xiii).

The emergence of the New Right as a political coalition is a result of economic, political, and cultural critiques about conditions in Canada and its provinces. Harrison and Kachur (1999) stated that ideologically, the New Right is a coalition that "married neo-liberalism (or economic liberalism) to residual forms of political and social conservatism" and the tendency is to "politicize and involve the business community" in provincial government efforts to reform public schools (pp. xix-xxi). The New Right does not, however, represent a unitary point of view and some of the points on which they disagree are "mutually inconsistent" (Levin & Young, 1999, p. 3). There are, however, three main beliefs that characterize the New Right, these are:

- public institutions, including schools, are not effectively meeting their goals due largely to their capture by employees and unions;
- the unfettered market is the preferable form for almost all social activities;
- the role of government should be reduced in most areas of social and economic policy. (Levin & Young, 1999, p. 3)

Levin and Young pointed out further that the major reforms that are occurring to public schools in Canada focus on three initiatives:

1) large-scale testing of students and evaluation of schools;
2) decentralization of management responsibility from intermediate bodies to individual schools, and
3) introducing elements of a market system to education (such as school choice or charter schools.) (p. 1)

The decades of the 1960s and 1970s saw "intensive educator activism" (Conley, as cited in Townsend, 1998, p. 4) to reform public schools. The pressure now, said Conley, is coming from external sources: "the most powerful and sustained calls for change in education … come from outside the education profession" (p. 4). Harrison and Kachur (1999) endorsed this view when they noted, "the most influential critique of Canadian education was that launched by business people, various neo-liberal organizations (e.g., the C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute, the Economic Council of Canada), and members of the intellectual community"(p. xix). In the last three decades schools have been increasingly compared to the corporate sector and business discourse[1] is used to describe the deficiencies of public schools.

> Anyone familiar with the management 'Bibles' that directed the Klein government's restructuring will recognize two common threads running through them, the first *ideological*, the second programmatic. The *ideological* thread states that government services should be run by *corporate principles*, preferably through *privatization* of those services. The programmatic thread involves bringing public services into disrepute in order to garner public support for their *privatization*. [italics added] (Harrison & Kachur, 1999, p. xxii)

The increasing influence of the corporate sector on public schools is significant because applying corporate sector ideology and discourse can dramatically alter the goals of public education, the processes utilized to attain those goals, the methods used to evaluate goal attainment, and the leadership required of school principals. For example, a particular discourse can become an identity and can be a "formidable tool of control and power" (Foucault, 1988, p. 114), in this case, over public schools. Winch (1958) articulated the significance of discourse when he stated, "understanding occurs primarily as a social practice" and there can be "a failure of communication between competing discourses" (as cited in Atkins, 1988, p. 439) such as public sector versus corporate sector discourse.

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[1] Discourse is defined by Blades as a "collection of what is said, written, or thought, usually presented through words or symbols for purposes of communication … each discourse 'order and combine words in particular ways and excludes or displaces other combinations'" (Blades & Ball, as cited in Blades, 1997, p. 41).

This power, control, and influence can be seen in some of the recent changes that have taken place in public schools. Innovations and changes that have occurred in the corporate sector have found their way into public schools. One such innovation is the movement toward decentralization of management[2], which is embodied in shared decision making[3] and site-based decision-making that "are being vigorously applied on the factory floors of many of our large corporations" (Langlois & McAdams, 1992, p. 4).

Chion-Kenney (1994) noted that decentralized school management "goes by many names: school-based management, school-based improvement, building-based management, school-improvement process, teacher empowerment, administrative decentralization, and/or shared-decision making" (p. 2). In this research decentralized school management will be referred to as site-based management (SBM) in reference to the decentralization of management functions to a particular site as opposed to a centralized location. School-based decision-making will be referred to as site-based decision-making (SBDM) in reference to the process used to make decisions at a site.

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[2] Decentralized management is about delegating management decisions that have been made centrally to the building level (Chion-Kenney, 1994, p.iv).

[3] Shared decision-making is also known as school-based decision making or site-based decision making and is defined by Alberta Learning in Policy 1.8.2 as follows: "School-based decision making involves the whole school community in teaching and learning in order to ensure high levels of student achievement. School-based decision making is a process through which major decisions are made at the school level about policies, instructional programs and services, and how funds are allocated to support them; and 'community' means a school's students, their parents and other community-based support elements available to the school" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. 2).

Both terms are explicitly synonymous and will be used together and expressed in this document as SBM/SBDM.

One of the reasons corporate sector innovations are finding their way into public schools may be the public's loss of confidence in public education. Barth (1990) pointed this out when he stated:

> A decade of decline in test scores, enrollments, resources, and public confidence now makes it clear that the public lacks commitment to public education in general, and confidence in its educators in particular. The cumulative effect of …, placement of children in private schools, school closings, and governmental devaluation of education is an unmistakable message. What public educators are doing is not only not good, it is not worthwhile…. As a result, schools face not only a crisis of public confidence but, more dangerously, a crisis of self-confidence. (p. 11)

Alberta Education referred to the public's dissatisfaction with the status quo in its publication *Meeting The Challenge: An Education Roundtable Workbook* (1993). Then Minister of Education Halvar Jonson argued that, "maintaining the *status quo* is not an option nor is tinkering with the existing system. Through the involvement of parents, students, business and community leaders, and the educators themselves, we can find lasting solutions and develop a *fundamentally new approach* to educating our youth" [italics added] (1993, p. 3).

Educational researchers Borman, Castenell & Gallagher (1993); Mazzoni (1991); and Whitty (1989) provided examples of business or corporate influence. They stated that the corporate sector demonstrates significant influence over education, by chairing "commissions on education" in New Zealand, by issuing "influential reports (such as … the Conference Board of Canada), and by ensuring that business practices" such as Total Quality Management[4] and decentralized management are "held up as examples for schools to emulate" (as cited in Levin & Young, 1999, p. 2). The decentralization of management functions is promoted as a more effective method of achieving educational reform. Glickman (1993) argued for this in his book *Renewing America's Schools: A Guide for School-Based Action*:

> After a decade of legislated reform, bureaucratic control, standardization of work, and external decisions for improving schools, we are shifting toward an unfettering of the system, allowing schools to be different and encouraging *site-based autonomy and responsibility* [italics added]. (as cited in Chion-Kenney, 1994, p. 22)

In one Canadian province, the Department of Education has mandated SBM/SBDM. Alberta outlined decentralized school management in Alberta Learning's policy 1.8.2, which is referred to as School-Based Decision Making. Policy 1.8.2 states, "a school and its community shall have the authority and the support to make decisions which directly impact on the education of students and shall be accountable for the results" (1996, p. 1). Another Canadian province took a different approach. The Saskatchewan Government commissioned a task force on the role of the school. That task force focused on the concept of community schools and gave a clear indication of the nature of decentralized management by defining a community school as one in which "parents are valued as partners in the education of their children; where every effort is made to give them meaningful involvement in establishing the goals of the school and in the design of the education program" (Tymchak, 2001, p. 48). Murphy and Beck pointed out that advocates of SBM/SBDM justify this move by stating that:

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[4] Total Quality Management refers to the systematic management of an organization's customer-supplier relationships in such a way as to ensure sustainable, steep-slope improvements in quality performance (Murgatroyd & Morgan, 1993, p. 59).

- The quality of decisions about educational programs will improve if the decisions are made by the persons with the greatest knowledge about a school and its students.
- Change is constant and requires that individual schools are increasingly flexible and responsive.
- Change mandated from the top does not work.
- Participation in decision making will result in higher levels of commitment, effort, and morale. (as cited in Reynolds, 1997, p. 2)

This integration of corporate discourse and methodologies into public schools has a direct impact on the leadership provided by principals. Aitken and Townsend (1998) studied the Alberta restructuring experience and found that "seventy eight percent of principals responded that their working conditions had worsened" under SBM/SBDM "while ten percent thought that they had improved" (p. 5). Responses such as these provided by principals to Aitken and Townsend indicate that educational leaders at the school site face "major challenges if the focus" of the move to SBM/SBDM "is to be on continuous school improvement" and accountability (1998, p. 5). Principals in Ontario face similar challenges as the Education Improvement Commission in Ontario confirmed that the focus is on improvement and accountability: "The development and implementation of a comprehensive accountability framework is the single most important factor that would have the greatest impact in improving our education system and student achievement" (2001, p. 3).

### Concern for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in a decentralized decision-making milieu

Those wanting school reform are demanding that educational leaders become more efficient and effective, and be held accountable for the effectiveness of their schools. Harrison and Kachur (1999) referred to accountability when they stated, "according to the government, the overhaul of the education system was necessary in order to bring costs under control and to make the system more *efficient*, *effective*, and *accountable*" [italics added] (p. 151). Peters and Waterman (1982) promoted such a message when they said; "we are talking about tough-minded respect for the individual and the willingness to train him [sic], to set reasonable and clear expectations for him [sic], and to grant him [sic] practical autonomy to step out and contribute directly to his [sic] job" (p. 239). They also referenced organizational theorist Haire who dealt with the issue of accountability when he said, "what gets measured gets done" (as cited in Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 268). Aitken and Townsend (1998) noted that the move to SBM/SBDM has important implications for principals because they are now being held accountable for the effectiveness of schools. Chion-Kenney (1994) affirmed this when she stated:

> Actual and expected benefits reported in the literature of site-based management usually reflect two major themes: *accountability* and *professionalism* as they relate to organizational *effectiveness* and adult and student learning. *Accountability* refers to making the system and its workers more responsive to student needs, civic responsibilities, community participation, and workplace demands.... "We're asking people to do something they've never done before, never had to do," said Billy Bruce who retired from the superintendency in Kentucky.... They always could say, "We're failing because of parents, or the central office, or the board of education," or something like this. But now they have to say, "This is our decision, we make it, and we have to be able to answer for it" [italics added]. (p. 9)

Enormous pressure to make schools more effective, efficient and accountable is now placed squarely on the shoulders of principals. The major difference this time is that it is reported that more is known about what makes schools effective. Studies like the Exemplary Schools Project; Manitoba School Improvement Project; Halton, Ontario Effective School Project, and the international research on school effectiveness are held up by ministry officials as examples of how to improve schools. Government Departments of Education assert that we know more about how schools actually change to become more effective. As an example, an Alberta Education document referred to Fullan's (1991) publication *The New Meaning of Education Change* and *Change Forces* (1993), and Hargreaves' (1994) *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Post-Modern Age* that detail the elements of change. Alberta Education (1997) stated, "despite the fact that" researchers like Fullan and Hargreaves "tell us that the vast majority of change implementations over the last 30 years have failed, we have gained a substantial body of knowledge about the process of change" (p. 19). Levin (2000) said: "We … know much more about the process of change and improvement. The problems and issues around implementation of change are well developed conceptually" (p. 3).

The move to decentralize management, the focus on efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, and the ideologies pressuring school reform will significantly impact the leadership provided by principals. Yet the research on what makes schools effective and the subsequent research on leadership in effective schools were done in traditional centralized decision-making educational milieux not in the seemingly non-traditional decentralized SBM/SBDM milieu. There is also considerable disagreement in the literature about what constitutes an effective school and effective leadership in the traditional school setting.

This research project explores the following question: What should effective leadership practices be for principals in the non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu? The research also examines whether principals might utilize reflection on practice to become more reflective and re-creative in their approaches to leadership. Working with a group of principals as action research partners this study set out to determine what they believe effective leadership practices should be for principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu given that participatory democracy is an integral part of SBM/SBDM, the public education environment in Canada, and in particular, a Western Canadian province[5], and the research on effective schools and effective principals. The action researchers also sought to determine whether reflection could be used in schools with staff so that they become more reflective and re-creative in their approaches to teaching.

Additional research questions

These additional questions were investigated in this study:

1. Can reflection on practice be an effective method of professional development for educational leaders, and if so, can reflective leadership be implemented within an SBM/SBDM milieu to empower teachers to become instructional leaders?
2. What are the effective leadership practices of principals in the traditional centralized decision-making school milieu and a non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu, and if there are differences, what are they and why are they different, and what is the relevance of these differences?
3. To what extent do SBM/SBDM leadership practices embody the values of participatory democracy, a democratic society, and to what extent must effective leaders commit themselves to pursuing the values and virtues of a democratic society through educational leadership?
4. During the dialogical journey, will truisms emerge that will form the foundation upon which action researchers will form a deeper understanding of effective leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu?
5. Will the dialogical journey provide action researchers the opportunity to acquire a deeper understanding of themselves, their environment, their colleagues, and transformative leadership?

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[5] Western Canadian Province: for the purpose of this reseach, western Canadian provinces include Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

# CHAPTER 2

## Background to the Study

Until 1994 Alberta's educational system was financed by government grants and local taxation raised by each school jurisdiction. In 1994, the government announced its major restructuring plan for education, and introduced amendments to the School Act that supported the plan. Then Minister of Education Halvar Jonson announced that "Albertans told us that a quality public education system, equity in funding among school jurisdictions, increased parental and school decision making, improved results and accountability, fewer school boards, a focus on basic education, and reduced spending on administration were the key components in determining future directions for education" in Alberta (Alberta Education, 1994, p. 2).

To carry out these directions, the government implemented a variety of initiatives. The first was to remove the authority of local school boards to raise and secure taxes by providing full funding of education through the provincial government. The second initiative was to decrease the number of Ministry regulations to ensure a minimum of external controls by the province on school boards and by school boards on schools. The third was to implement a SBM/SBDM approach to governance. The fourth initiative was to give parents more opportunities to choose between schools, and a stronger voice in education through school councils. The fifth was to reduce the number of school boards from 141 to 60, thereby eliminating a significant number of elected trustees and central office bureaucrats. The final initiative was to establish a more accountable education system where education partners report to the public on the achievement of predetermined performance measures and improvement targets.

Currently, Saskatchewan's education system is financed by government grants and local taxation raised by each school jurisdiction. In 1996, Saskatchewan Education published a discussion paper on restructuring public education for the new century in the province. At approximately the same time the government initiated voluntary amalgamations of school jurisdictions. Reddyk (2001) stated that the Saskatchewan Government

> is committed to amalgamation as a restructuring device to make the best possible use of resources, while, at the same time, recognizing pressures from issues such as global competitiveness; poverty and emotional distress; the changing demographics of our province; the demand for greater parental involvement in educational decision-making; and the need for increased integration of services to children in the areas of education, health, and social services. (p. 3)

The reduction in expenditures on education was a universal theme in almost every province in Canada between 1990 and 2000 except for British Columbia. That province actually increased appropriations for education during that time. Recently British Columbia moved to amalgamate school districts and to centralize educational financing. School boards in the province are now engaged in entrepreneurial ventures to make up the difference in funding they need to provide basic services to students. "Instead of providing sufficient funding to school boards to meet the costs of educating the students for whom they are responsible, the B.C. government has told school boards they can establish businesses to make up the shortfall in revenue" (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 208). All such initiatives greatly influence the leadership of school principals. Ungerleider stated that the move to entrepreneurial ventures, "does not bode well for public education… [as]

entrepreneurial activities divert time and human and material resources away for the main focus on public schooling" (2003, p. 208). Osborne and Gaebler (1992) foreshadowed the changes perceived by some to be needed in public education when they said:

> Today's environment demands institutions that are extremely flexible and adaptable. It demands institutions that deliver high-quality goods and services, squeezing ever more bang out of every buck. It demands institutions that are responsive to their customers, offering choices of nonstandardized services; that lead by persuasion and incentives rather than commands; that give their employees a sense of meaning and control, even ownership. It demands institutions that empower citizens rather than simply serving them. (p. 15)

The statement made by Osborne and Gaebler reflects corporate discourse and the explicit message it sent received strong support from provincial governments such as those in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario at the time of this study. The messages sent and initiatives implemented by governments suggested to principals the type of leadership that was required. Reading through government documents it was evident that various governments felt the corporate sector was more efficient and effective, and public schools and their principals should adopt corporate methods that have been reputed to increase an organization's efficiency and effectiveness. These same government documents, however, restricted the flexibility that principals were reported to have in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

As an example, Alberta Learning[6] purported to give more control over the means of education to schools through the move to SBM/SBDM. The Alberta *Government Accountability Act* introduced in 1995, however, limited that flexibility by "establishing a framework for a new model of accountability that mandated much greater *articulation* between the provincial Ministry of Learning, school boards and schools than previous accountability initiatives" [italics added] (Aitken, Brandon, Burger, Klinck, McKinnon & Mutch, 2001, p. 1). Departments of Education further reduced flexibility because they set the end goals, which were the standards that schools were required to meet even though they were supposedly free to use any means to achieve those standards. Sergiovanni (September, 2000) pointed out that the freedom to use any means is reduced by those who set the end goals:

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[6] Readers should be aware that during the 1997/98 school year Alberta Education and Alberta Advance Education were combined into one Ministry and called Alberta Learning. Both terms will be used as appropriate based on the date of the publication referenced.

> Since standards and assessments determine the curriculum, how time is spent, how financial and other resources are deployed, how teachers teach, who gets promoted and even how a good school is defined, the ends of schooling wind up determining the means, leaving schools with precious little real discretion over the policy process as it affects teaching, learning and assessment. (p. 8)

Another way that governments restricted the flexibility of schools was through competition. In Alberta parents and students could choose from a wide range of options when selecting schools. They could select from public schools, Catholic schools, francophone schools, private schools, and charter schools[7]. They could also access a number of unique and innovative programs – including home education[8], online/virtual schools[9], outreach programs[10] and alternative programs[11]. Private schools, although not part of the public system of education, are a supplement to public education in Alberta and received "$2,672 per funded student," which was sixty percent of the basic instruction rate provided to public schools (Alberta Learning, 2003, Section 7.4, p. 1).

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[7] Charter schools are autonomous non-profit public schools designed to provide innovative or enhanced education programs that improve the acquisition of student skills, attitudes and knowledge in some measurable way ([On-line] Available: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca).

[8] Home Education program means parents who choose to educate their children at home assume primary responsibility for delivering and supervising their child's courses of study and work as partners with a school board or accredited private school to ensure the child's educational goals are being met (Alberta Learning, Home Education Regulation, A.R. 283/94).

[9] An Online (virtual) program is a program offered by a school that is delivered electronically at a school site or off-campus, under the instruction and complete supervision of a certificated teacher of a board or accredited private school ( [On-line] Available: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca).

In Saskatchewan there was less choice. There were four publicly funded education systems: public, Catholic, Fransaskois and First Nations. Private schools existed but they were not publicly funded unless a religiously based private school gained associate school status by entering into an agreement with a public or separate school board. As the result of such an agreement, the religiously based private school received some funding from the provincial government. Parents could also choose to educate their children at home using provincial curricula or curricula of their own choosing. They could also access online/virtual programs but these were limited but were being expanded.

This move to expand educational options was one-method governments used to ensure that parents had an educational environment of choice. It also placed enormous pressure on principals to utilize those leadership practices that would keep their school competitive in order to maintain a school's student population.

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[10] An Outreach program provides an educational alternative for students who, due to individual circumstances, find that the traditional school setting does not meet their needs ( [On-line] Available: http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca).

[11] An "alternative program" means an education program that (a) emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject-matter, or (b) uses a particular teaching philosophy, but that is not (c) a special education program, (d) a program referred to in section 5, or (e) a program of religious education offered by a separate school board (Section 16, School Act).

The importance of maintaining a school's student population related directly to a school's ability to provide quality[12] educational programs. Alberta Learning made reference to quality programs in *Business Plan 2000-03*: "quality programs … are responsive, flexible, accessible, relevant and affordable" (2000, p. 229). One of the ways Alberta Learning measured quality was by surveying parents, students and the public. Two of their measures of quality contained within *Business Plan 2000-03* were:

- Percentage of high school students, parents (of ECS – 12 students) and the public satisfied overall with the quality of basic education.
- Percentage of Alberta employers satisfied with Alberta's learning System. (2000, pp. 230-236)

In Alberta quality programming was to be addressed so that equity of educational opportunity existed. Alberta Learning (1999) stated that "equity" exists when "all students in Alberta" … "have access to a quality basic education regardless of where in the province they live" (p. 2). The definition of equity in Saskatchewan was

> the fair and equal treatment of all members of our society who are entitled to participate in and enjoy the benefits of an education. All students and adults have the opportunity to *participate fully* and to *experience success* and human dignity while developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society [italics added].
> (Saskatchewan Education, 1997, p. 5)

One of the biggest challenges faced by principals was the provision of an equitable educational experience that met the expectations of quality held by parents and students no matter where they lived. The issues of equity and quality were the lifeworld[13] of principals in that an individual's perception of equity and quality, or lack thereof, might be one of the ways school effectiveness was determined. If parents determined that the school was not effective because it did not offer a quality program, they might choose to enroll their child in another school. "The notion that quality and performance in education are strictly matters of personal taste is best exemplified in market schools, whether they are based on vouchers, capitation grants (in which schools get public money based on the number of students they attract), or charter schools" (Elmore, 2000, p. 5). The parental decision to move their child from one school to the next and its impact on capitation grants, had more of an impact on an SBM/SBDM milieu where funding followed a student to a school, than it did in the traditional centralized milieu. In a traditional centralized milieu formulas were used to staff schools, which minimized the impact of declining enrollment at a school. The general impact, however, was the same because fewer students resulted in fewer teachers, but in an SBM/SBDM milieu that impact was more immediate.

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[12] Quality must be defined in terms of meeting all the customer's needs. Quality education must first meet the needs of the student, but must also meet the needs of the parents, the community, the work place, and society (Chion-Kenney, 1994, p. 49).

Equity of educational opportunity in a school can impact on whether that school was considered effective by those who choose to make that decision. Ensuring that parents could choose schools and that funding followed the student to the school of choice was one of the amendments made by the Alberta Government in 1995. In Alberta

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[13] "When we talk about the stuff of culture, the essence of values and beliefs, the expression of needs, purposes, and desires of people, and about the sources of deep satisfaction in the form of meaning and significance, we are talking about the lifeworld of schools and of parents, teachers, and students" and principals (Sergiovanni, 2000, p.5). Sergiovanni noted that the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas provided a theoretical framework and language system for understanding lifeworld and systemsworld.

Learning's *Funding Manual for School Authorities in the 2000/2001 School Year* (2000) it stated that:

> The funding framework facilitates school-based decision making and the involvement of principals, teachers, school support staff, and **parents** in deciding how education funds are expended in their **schools**. The provision that instruction funding follows students to the public and separate **schools** they attend, provides **parents** and students with greater choice of education programs. The choice of programs includes various learning environments for students, such as formal school setups, home education, outreach, and institutional programs. In some locations, choices are also available for the regular program year or multi-track program of year round education [bolding in original]. (Pt. 1, p. 2)

Unfortunately, the concept of choice was more germane in an urban setting than it was in a rural one. In many cases parents had no choice, as there was only one school in the rural community. For their part, principals were challenged to address the issue of equity of educational opportunity such that, no matter where students were located in a province, those students demonstrated overall achievement in all educational parameters (for example, academic, social, physical and emotional) regardless of the school's size or location. The significance of this was the impact it had on the leadership practices of principals and the challenges, equity being one of them, which faced principals in such a competitive educational environment. That competitive environment was made even more complex in Alberta by the Government's decision to introduce Charter Schools, online/virtual schools, increase funding to private schools, promote home education programs, and to publicize achievement and diploma examination results such that schools could be compared.

An example of the increase in the complexity of this competitive environment can be seen in the number of students involved in a home-based education program in Alberta. Walter (2000) indicated that in 1991/1992 there were 2548 students in home education programs. In the 1999/2000 school year there were 7085 students in home education programs. During the same 1999/2000-school year there were 1136 students enrolled in blended programs[14] and 4050 enrolled in online/virtual schools/programs. Walter (2000) pointed out that online/virtual schools/programs had increased from 1 school in 1995 to 19 schools in the 1999/2000 school year (see Appendix A for analysis).

Such a competitive environment was made even more complex by the issuing of academic report cards on Alberta schools by the Fraser Institute, a non-profit Vancouver-based economic and social think-tank. Carrigg, a reporter for the Edmonton Sun wrote, "To rate schools the institute used diploma marks, exam failure rate, diploma completion rates, difference between school marks and diploma marks and diploma courses taken per student" (May 5, 2000, p, 2). The Edmonton Sun used headlines like "Making the Grade: Old Scona tops list for second straight year; Bonnie Doon flunks; Choosing the right school: Data helpful in deciding where your kids should go"; and "The Good, The Bad, The Ugly" to highlight what they reported as "the state of high schools in Alberta" (May 5, 2000). The Fraser Institute's "publication of the ranking of schools in Alberta, created the perception that the examination results can be used to determine which schools provide the best educational experiences for students" (Aitken, et al., 2001, p. 8).

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[14] Blended program means an educational program consisting of two distinct parts: 1) an in-school program where a teacher employed by a school board or accredited private school is responsible for providing for the delivery and evaluation of courses; and 2) a home education program which meets the requirements of the Home Education Regulations"(Funding Manual, 2000, p. 1 of the Glossary).

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation [STF] opposed the publication of a ranking of the schools in Saskatchewan on the basis of academic achievement. In an article printed in Saskatoon on September 29, 2001 in the Star Phoenix, the General Secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation stated that the Fraser Institute picks "a few standardized measures of some kind and then use that to rank all of the schools in the province from the best to the worst" (p. A3). The position put forward by the STF in that same article was that this ranking was "not an accurate way to measure how good a school is" (p. A3).

Complex competitive environments like these decreased the flexibility that principals were reported to possess. Pressures such as these forced principals to focus on those leadership practices that ensured schools met certain ends so that students, parents and others considered them to be effective. There was also considerable research on school effectiveness that was used to determine the effectiveness of a school. What was of concern was that the correlates of school effectiveness were made in less complex competitive environments, and in more traditional centralized educational milieux. It is therefore problematic to apply the practices purported to be representative of effective leaders in schools determined to be effective as indicators of effective leadership practices for principals in SBM/SBDM milieux. Sergiovanni raised such a concern:

> Though lists of general characteristics are helpful, they are not readily translated into specific prescriptions for management and leadership practice.... In sum, indiscriminate application of school-effectiveness research findings and, in particular, the development of generic lists of correlates or indicators that are subsequently applied uniformly to schools pose serious questions about the proper use of research and can result in negative, unanticipated consequences for teaching and learning. (1991, pp. 90-91)

Using effective schools research to systematically improve schools is also problematic. Sergiovanni pointed this out when he cited the findings of Wimpelburg, Teddlie, and Stringfield (1989). Their findings resulted in the following conclusion: "It is patently foolish to attempt 'effective schools' changes in schools that are wholly different from the settings in which the 'effective schools' correlates were isolated" (1991, p. 91). Sergiovanni went on to state that effectiveness characteristics and the practices they produce could be considered to be "general indicators" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 91).

## Effective schools research

The launching by the Soviets of Sputnik 1 on October 4, 1957, "more than any other," event generated considerable debate about the adequacy of education in North America (Sewall, 1999, p. 32). The debate became more focused with the publication of numerous reports designed to identify needed educational reforms. In 1959 the Cameron Report identified the ills associated with education in Alberta and proposed a "cure." In the United States Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld and York (1966) issued a report entitled *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which indicated that family background was the primary determinant of how well children do in school or the corollary assumption that schools have little impact on students' achievement. This report stimulated the effective schools research that challenged Coleman et al.'s findings. In Alberta, the Worth Report (1972) and the Harder Report (1977) proposed a "blue print" for changes to education that were designed to provide a better education to students and to make schools more effective (Harrison & Kachur, 1999, pp. 13-14).

During the 1960s and 1970s considerable research was undertaken to determine what made schools effective. The researchers on school effectiveness such as Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweetzer and Wisenbaker (1977); Brookover and Lezotte (1979); Edmonds (1979); Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston and Smith (1979) concluded that if school resources were effectively used then every child could master basic life skills and schools could be successful in teaching all children. These conclusions were based on the identification of schools that were successful at teaching all students the skills needed to succeed in the following grade.

Several researchers on school effectiveness studied effective schools to identify common elements that existed and which distinguished them from less effective schools. Weber (1971) found four significant factors common to what he called effective schools: leadership, high expectations, orderly climate and stress on reading. Shoemaker and Fraser (1981) in a discussion of the New York Study (1978), and the Maryland Study (1978) and Venesky's (1980) Study in Delaware revealed several additional factors. Those factors were: a positive principal/teacher interaction; an instructional leadership role by the principal; an assertive rather than passive principal's role, and a leadership orientated towards staff and student achievement.

In *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston and Smith (1979) discussed the effects of different schools on children and concluded that the following factors were found in effective schools: students actively engaged in learning activities; praise freely given and discipline firm but infrequently applied; a general attitude and expectation for academic success; students responsible for personal and school duties and resources; immediate feedback on acceptable performance; staff consensus on school values and aims; clear guidelines and principles for student behaviour; an environment that was clean and comfortable; a concern for individual and group student welfare by staff members; and treatment of students in ways that emphasize their success and potential for success.

Purkey and Smith (1983) in their comprehensive review of the effective schools literature summarized the characteristics that were identified in various studies. They discovered that the variability of the characteristics that emerged stemmed from the research design or the way in which the characteristics were subdivided or grouped rather than from any real conflicts in the research findings. Based on this review and others Chrispeels and Meaney (1985) found three important facts that stood out:

> 1. School effectiveness encompasses the total school organization and culture as well as classroom management and teaching.
> 2. The characteristics can be defined and assessed individually, but the research indicates that all must be in place, at least to some degree, to maximize a school's effectiveness.
> 3. The interaction of the characteristics in a school results in an impact that is greater than if the characteristics were applied individually. (p. 5)

Chubb (1987) stated that from his research organization and structure together constitute an overarching system of behaviour in which everything is related to everything else. These factors determined the school's educational effectiveness. Chubb found that private schools are more effective than public schools since they tended "to develop team like organizations that exercise greater control over the schools, [whereas] public schools are captives of democratic policies" (1987, p. 1). These findings are consistent with the findings of Coleman and associates (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982; Hoffer, Greenly & Coleman, 1985). Chubb (1987) stated further that the following factors affect school performance: external authorities; principals; school staffing; goals and policies; and teachers and teaching.

More recently Canadian studies like Gaskell's (1995) Exemplary Schools Project, Earl and Lee's (1998) Manitoba School Improvement Project, and the Halton, Ontario Effective Schools Project 1989-95 published by Stoll and Fink (1996) investigated school success. The use of the term success as opposed to effective, which will be discussed later, seemed to introduce a new term that gained acceptance within the literature but caused additional confusion. These studies utilized a set of "objective criteria: achievement on provincial exams, graduation rates, participation rates in writing examinations in various courses, number of courses taken in which provincial examinations are written, and comparison of school marks to provincial marks" to determine success (Wendel, 2000, p. 4). This was a significant contrast to the work of previous researchers. Wendel pointed this contrast out when he stated that the objective criteria were not universally accepted as indicators of school effectiveness or success. He went on to state they were, however, "the most universally accepted basic indictors of the achievement and progress of a school's students" (2000, p. 4).

Glickman (1993), however, saw "a successful school as one that is able to continually renew itself, one that is able to know what it is about, take risks to try something new, evaluate outcomes, and change future actions accordingly" (as cited in Wilson, Iverson & Chrastil, April 2001, p. 67). For his part, Sergiovanni believed "successful schools are characterized by tight alignment between a defining core of values for the school and the decisions that teachers and administrators make about implementing goals and objectives, curriculum, teaching, supervision and evaluation" (1991, p. 158). Cuban (1984) raised his concern that there was too much reliance on test scores as a measure of effectiveness. He felt that the

> concept of effectiveness is too narrow. Tied narrowly to test scores in lower-order math and reading skills, school effectiveness research and programs ignore many skills, habits, and attitudes beyond the reach of paper-and-pencil tests. (p. 996)

In their study of fifty elementary schools in London, Mortimore and Sammons (1987) discovered that among schools much of the variation on students' progress and development was accounted for by differences in school policies and practices. They indicated further that such policies and practices were within the control of the principal and teachers and that these factors could be changed and improved.

According to Barton (1984), seventy percent of schools could be correctly identified into the effective category based on the differences in climate perceptions. Ahmad (1981) found in his research that the climate of elementary schools was significantly related to student achievement. Beck and Murphy (1996) said "most thoughtful analysts…insist that schools are successful when students are engaged in learning and growing in their ability to solve problems, to think critically and creatively, and to work collaboratively and independently on a range of challenging activities" (p. 19). For his part Sergiovanni questioned whether effective and successful schools meant the same thing. Sergiovanni (1991) said, "the terms are often used interchangeably to…communicate the same level of accomplishment, but this can cause confusion…. An effective school is understood to be a school whose students achieve well in basic skills as measured by achievement tests…" this is a "limited view of effectiveness" because it did not take into consideration "broader, higher-order, and more qualitative intellectual and academic views of effectiveness…. Successful is meant to communicate a new and broader definition of effectiveness" (p. 76, see Appendix B for comparison of successful and effective).

Mortimore (1991) said that, "an effective school is one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake" (as cited in Wendel, 2000, p. 20). Wendel (2000) pointed out that "school effectiveness has been defined as the degree to which schools add value to the educational achievement of its students" (p. 67). Stoll and Fink stated that a school was effective if it:

> - Promotes progress for all of its pupils beyond what would be expected given consideration of initial attainment and background factors;
> - Ensures that each pupil achieves the highest standards possible;
> - Ensures all aspects of pupil achievement and development; and
> - Continues to improve from year to year. (as cited in Wendel, 2000, p. 68)

The research clearly indicated that there was no universal agreement on what constituted an effective school. Additionally, there was even debate as to whether the term effective was suitable as opposed to the use of the term successful school. The research pointed out that there was some general agreement that effectiveness or success related to student performance. This lack of agreement was critical because it raised some serious issues, which in turn called into question the correlational research on leadership practices of principals in schools considered to be effective.

## The lens through which principal effectiveness is viewed

The definition used to define school effectiveness is important for principals because it might be the lens through which principal effectiveness is viewed and determined. Blase, Blase, Anderson and Dungan (1995) affirmed this when they pointed out that extensive research was done in the 1980s on "effective school principals" (p. 5). That research was linked to the effective schools research of the 1960s and 1970s: "Although only a small number of qualitative studies of effective principals was published during the 1980s, these studies provide descriptions of the types of strong and effective leadership that were touted during the 1980s and preceding and, by and large, continue to dominate conceptions of effectiveness in the 1990s" (Blase, et al., 1995, p. 5). This research suggested that the leadership provided by the school building principal was an integral part of the improvement process. Such findings were supported by a report issued by the National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE] (1999) that characterized "effective principals as the 'lynchpins of school improvement' and the 'gatekeepers of change'" (as cited in Educational Research Service [ERS], 2000, p. 2). That same document cited Cawelti's (1987) research that analyzed the connection between effective principals and effective schools and summarized the research by stating: "Research has documented what common sense has long dictated: that school leaders do determine whether or not schools are successful" (as cited in ERS, 2000, p. 2).

Sergiovanni (1996) cited management author Burt Nanus as having found: "There is no mystery…. Effective leaders have agendas; they are totally results oriented" (p. 2). Such a view of effective leadership might make sense in a traditional setting, where sources of power and influence are embodied in bureaucratic and personal authority. In decentralized milieux the emphasis was more toward community leadership and shared decision-making. Community based leadership was idea based. As Sergiovanni pointed out, it is "idea-based leadership, principals have a special responsibility to share their visions of what schools can become, but they must do this in an invitational mode, not in the command or sell modes usually advocated by business writers" (1996, p. 83).

The focus of community leadership was to create bonds that connect students, teachers and parents. In a somewhat similar vein Fullan cited Elmore (2000) as having pointed out that leaders facilitated bonding within an organization by ensuring that productive relationships existed and by ensuring that people were held to account. Elmore stated:

> The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. (as cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 65)

Research in the corporate sector supported such findings and established the importance of leadership in effective organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Peters & Waterman, 1982). This research established practices that were congruent to leaders in effective organizations. This same research was applied to school principals and established that they too exhibited similar practices within effective schools (Hostetler, 1984).

The vast majority of the research, however, situated school principals as objects to be studied in centralized decision-making mileux, as opposed to research partners integrally involved in the research project and operating in SBM/SBDM mileux. Levine and Lezotte (March 1990) pointed out "much of our most useful or 'usable' knowledge regarding correlates of effectiveness has been drawn from case studies of schools" (p. 3). Thus the discourse on effective leadership practice, especially as it related to leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu, only purported to reflect an understanding of effective leadership practices in decentralized decision-making mileux.

If a limited understanding of effective leadership practices in centralized decision-making mileux exists, the SBM/SBDM initiative adds to the complexity of understanding effective leadership practices in decentralized decision-making mileux. Langlois and McAdams (1992) referred to this complexity when they stated that successful SBM/SBDM would need principals with a higher level of both technical and people skills than were commonly found among administrators of traditional schools. One of the reasons for this was the advent of SBM/SBDM that required principals to involve the whole school community in collaborative decision-making. For instance, Alberta Learning's policy 1.8.2 stated that: "major decisions about policies, instructional programs and services and the allocation of funds to support them *must* be made collaboratively" [italics added] (1996, p. 1). Research completed in Saskatchewan by Steeves (1995) found a similar expectation in that "respondents anticipated an increased role for parents regarding educational decisions that affected their children. It was generally agreed that parents will increasingly demand a more direct role in their children's education" (p. 14).

The concept of school effectiveness had received intense scrutiny over the last thirty years. As a result, the definition of school effectiveness had expanded and become more complex. While school effectiveness still involved relevant programming and the related practice, it had expanded to include more specific guidelines for where and how change would take place. In addition, concepts such as effective schools, successful schools, school improvement, efficiency, and accountability now had a stronger relationship to people and relationships, attitudes and commitment, and communication and support.

Many of the effective schools research findings indicated that a principal in a traditional educational setting must be an instructional leader (Chrispeels & Meaney, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989). However, in the studies of leadership in effective schools that followed the effective schools research, has generated some confusion about the nature of leadership and the role of leadership within an effective school.

### Confusion emerges regarding leadership in effective schools

In effective schools principals demonstrated strong leadership "especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction" (Chrispeels & Meaney, 1985, p. 15). Valverde (1988) stated, "effective schools have principals who care about instruction and who are proactive in educational program development" (p. 319). He went on and stated "principals who create effective schools place a high priority on instructional improvement" (p. 319). The principal played a critical role in communicating the mission and goals of the staff, parents and students. Lezotte (1985) felt that the principal set the climate for frequent and regular discussions of teaching and learning. Valverde

(1988) agreed that principals provided a positive climate conducive to learning because they set high but realistic standards, helped the faculty to establish instructional goals, and assisted teachers in helping students reach acceptable achievement levels.

Pollack, Chrispeels, and Watson (1987) in their study of descriptive factors of schools that become effective found the following instructional leadership attributes: provided clear, strong centralized instructional leadership; was available and accessible; initiated coordination of instructional programs; was highly visible; gave feedback to teachers regarding instructional techniques; observed in classrooms and provided corrective feedback, and focused on instructional issues at staff meetings. Andrews (1987) believed that the characteristics most important for a principal as perceived by their teachers were a visible presence in the school and setting the vision for the school. Those same teachers did not mention the instructional leadership role of the principal. Andrews also found that "when teachers have a very positive perception of the quality of their workplace they are more productive, so there is an incremental growth in student achievement" (p. 10).

Scheerens and Creemers (1990) agreed that leadership was important. In fact, they believed that many of the characteristics associated with effective schools were really aspects of leadership. "We might wonder whether 'frequent evaluation' and 'orderly climate' could not better be seen as aspects of strong instructional leadership, than as independent causes" (p. 3). Chrispeels (1990) elaborated on the interrelationship of three components or school wide effectiveness factors: school climate and culture, curriculum and instructional practices and school organizational structure and procedures.

She then expanded on the interrelationship of these components with school leadership and student outcomes in effective schools. She concluded, "through leadership, the school wide variables are altered in ways that create a context as well as the parameters for learning in the classroom" (p. 6). Chrispeels (1990) defined leadership in effective schools as

> an influence relationship among principal, school staff, students, community and district staff intended to bring about changes in the culture, curriculum and instruction, and organization of the school so that there are significant and equitable achievement gains for all ethnic and income groups. (p. 38)

Based on Chrispeels' definition effective school leadership encompassed four broad dimensions: shared vision or mission; shared leadership; shared learning; and a commitment to change. As a result of her study and the work of others (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Fullen, Bennett, & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989; Rossman, Corbett & Firestone, 1988) it was concluded that these dimensions of leadership were more "likely to bring about long lasting change that transforms the school to an institution where all children master the basic curriculum" (p. 38). According to Bennis "the factor that improves the work force and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is leadership" (as cited in Lawson, 1988). Chubb (1987) supported this assertion when he stated:

> According to much of the new literature on school effectiveness, the principal holds a key to school success. Excellence in education appears to be promoted by the principal who articulates clear goals, holds high expectations of students and teachers, exercises strong educational leadership, steers clear of administrative burdens, and effectively extracts resources from the environment. (p. 235)

From a broader perspective on leadership, Lambert (1995) supplied some illustrative examples of definitions of effective leadership:

> Peter Senge (1990): *Leaders* design learning processes whereby people throughout the organization deal productively with issues and learn the disciplines.
> Philip Schlechty (1990): *Leaders* invite others to share authority.
> Stephen Covey (1991): *Leaders* foster mutual respect and build a complementary team in which strengths are made productive and weaknesses become essentially irrelevant.
> Roland Barth (1992): *Leaders* make happen that in which you believe while working with all in a community of leaders [italics in original]. (pp. 30-31)

Effective leadership was recognized as an influencing relationship. Leaders influence student achievement indirectly in schools by creating an organizational context and attitudes, and provide--often through negotiations between parents and community--the availability of learning resources. Moreover, "principals play a critical role in bringing about change necessary to increase the effectiveness of schools and teachers" (Hawley, Rosenholtz, Goodstein & Hasselbring, 1984, p. 54). "Principals are central to linking people (teachers) together" (Andrews, 1987, p. 380).

Meyers (1987) raised the issue of diversity in successful leadership styles, which seemed to reflect the diversity of organizations and community patterns of norms, values, and size. Meyers also surfaced the concern that there was no clear picture of leadership.

> When it comes to institutionalizing school development we still have not got it right and we still do not have a clear picture of leadership in schools and the mythology of the principal...like all myths...has been revered in thought or as an ideal than it has been in practice. (as cited in Rost, 1987, p. 1)

The model of the principals that emerged from the effective schools research indicated that such leaders were more than willing to impose their ideas on the school, staff, students and parents. The model principal was "strong, forceful, assertive… [and] quick to take the initiative" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 183). DuFour and Eaker went on to note that effective schools had leaders who were "aggressive, professionally alert, dynamic principals determined to create the schools they deemed necessary, no matter what" (1998, p. 183). The authors then pointed out that such an autocratic approach might work in a factory model of schooling but was suspect in professional learning communities. DuFour and Eaker cited Lezotte (1997) as having stated that emerging effective schools research concluded, "that principals lead from the center rather than the top." They noted further that Liebermann (1995) said:

> The 1990s view of leadership calls for principals to act as partners with teachers, involved in a collaborative quest to examine practices and improve schools. Principals are not expected to control teachers but to support them and to create opportunities for them to grow and develop. (as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 184)

They concluded by stating that professional learning communities needed much less command, control and dictating, and much more learning, leading and orchestrating.

The research on leadership in effective schools seemed to be clear that the leadership provided by principals was vital to school improvement. The research, however, did not clearly identify the effective leadership practices of principals in schools that were considered to be effective. Hawley, et al. (1984) pointed out what was clear from all of this research when they cited Cuban as having stated that: "One of the most widely accepted propositions about school effectiveness is that principals make a significant difference. While the logic of this assertion is clear enough, the different things principals actually do that make schools effective are usually not pinpointed by researchers" (p. 53). Other researchers raised concerns regarding how principals practiced effective leadership, for example, collaboratively or autocratically.

Leadership: A relationship between leaders and followers

Burns (1978) defined leadership as "a reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (p. 425). Rost (1987) defined leadership as

> a reciprocal relationship wherein persons (leaders) who have a personal motivation to act influence in a competitive situation by mobilizing resources that engage other persons (followers) to act in ways that realize goals mutually held by both leader and followers. (p. 4)

For her part, Lambert cited three examples provided by other authors of the status of the relationship between leaders and followers:

> William Foster (1989): *Leadership* is the reciprocal processes among leaders and followers working toward a common purpose.
> John Gardner (1990): *Leadership* is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group (followers) to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared with his or her followers.
> Margaret Wheatley (1992): *Leadership* is context-dependent and relational among leaders and followers, with an emphasis on the concepts of community, dignity, meaning, and love [italics in original]. (1995, pp. 30-31)

Leadership was thus viewed as a relationship between followers and a leader in which a connection was developed or a felt need existed. Regardless of the reason, there was the development of a felt need that was reflective of an overall altruistic need. "Altruism derives its power from the follower's perception that the leader is committed to their welfare. In reciprocal and paradoxical fashion, followers gladly bestow power on leaders who eschew it for themselves but use it to serve others" (Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 8).

Weber (1999) clarified the relationship further when he said, “the bottom line is that leadership shows up in the inspired action of others….” and “we should assess leadership by the degree to which people around leaders are inspired” (as cited in Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan [ASEBP], 1999, p. 33). That inspired action idea was somewhat similar to Sergiovanni’s explanation of leadership “getting a group to take action that embodies the leader’s purposes… or shared purposes (as should be the case in schools)” (1996, p. 87). Sergiovanni expanded upon the idea of the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers in his book *The Lifeworld of Leadership: Creating Culture, Community and Personal Meaning in Our Schools*. He stated: “followers of constructivist theories of learning are hardly subordinates but are instead moved by faith in the integrity of ideas and the strength of their commitment to” them (2000, p. 168). Sergiovanni differentiated between subordinates whom “do what they are supposed to do, but little else” and followership that emerged “when leadership practice is based on compelling ideas,” which as a result altered the traditional school hierarchy “principals at the top and teachers and students at the bottom, to one that is in flux” (1992, pp. 70-71).

Lipham and Getzels (1987) in their review of leadership and the relationship between leader and follower stated that, “the most recent approach to the study of leadership is that of the analysis of leadership behaviour which recognizes that both psychological and sociological factors, and both individual and situational factors, are powerful behavioral determinants” (p. 116). Halpin (1959) stated that the concept of leader behaviour toward others focused upon "observed behaviour rather than upon a posited capacity inferred from this behaviour" (p. 12).

Some theories of leadership as they related to the leader and follower relationship were based on a behaviouralist approach. Getzels and Guba (1957) identified three leadership styles: normative, personal and transactional. Lipham and Rankin (1982) described a four-factor theory of educational leadership that included structural, facilitative, supportive, and participative leadership dimensions. Lipham, Rankin, and Hoeh (1985) defined leadership as that "behaviour of an individual that initiates a new structure in interaction within a social system by changing the goals, objectives, configurations, procedures, inputs, processes, or outputs of the system" (p. 66). This definition takes into account effectiveness and efficiency, group-achievement and group maintenance, situational and personalistic determinants, organizational and individual goals, relationships, conflicts, context, and means and ends. Lipham, et al. (1985) pointed out that: "Leadership is dynamic, since it occurs in interactive social systems" (p. 67).

Lawson (1988) summarized Bennis' study of successful leaders and concluded that each, to some extent, had four competencies: Management of Attention, Management of Meaning, Management of Trust and Management of Self. Kouzes and Posner (1987) believed that leadership was an observable set of practices and that leadership was not something mystical and ethereal. They viewed leaders as utilizing five major practices: (a) challenging the process, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) enabling others to act, (d) modeling the way, and (e) encouraging the heart. These practices again were not distinct from what had been said before, but were reputed to allow the practices of leadership to be observed.

Kouzes and Posner developed this list of practices after studying leaders who performed at their best in a situation and developed intended changes. The practices exhibited by leaders enabled them to get extraordinary things done in their organization. Kouzes and Posner also saw a distinction between managers and leaders (see Appendix C for analysis of distinction between managers and leaders by Reynolds). They viewed the former as honouring stability and controlling through systems and procedures. Leaders were seen as thriving on change; exercising "control" by means of a worthy and inspired vision of what might be, arrived at jointly with the people in their organization; and understanding that empowering people by expanding their roles was the only course to sustained relevance and vitality. Andrews concurred when he stated, "leaders know how to empower people" (1987, p. 13). Lieberman (1987) related this to principals when she said, "whenever the spark of leadership emerges within their teachers they (principals) see it and nurture it" (as cited in Andrews, 1987, p. 13), thus empowering individuals to be leaders and to become part of the leadership team thus expanding the repertoire of leadership skills available at any one school. Lambert expanded on the leader and follower relationship by focusing on learning and the collaborative construction of meaning. She stated, "leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (1998, p. 5).

Hostetler (1984) linked the leadership practices of those in the corporate sector to principals who operated in the public education sector, when he found that there was a significant relationship between the practices of principals and those practices identified by Peters and Waterman in excellent private sector companies. Fullan seemed to sum up the relationship between leader and follower when he stated: "The litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilizes people's commitment to putting their energy into actions designed to improve things. It is an individual commitment, but it is above all collective mobilization" (2001, p. 9).

## The effect of management functions on the instructional leadership role of the principal

One concern that emerged regarding the effect of management functions on leadership was the "effect that the management of SBDM processes had on principal's ability to be effective leaders" (Aitken & Townsend, 1998, p. 5). Smith and Piele (1996) stated that:

> Management issues are an essential part of the principal's role under SBM. Principals are assuming greater responsibility in determining budget priorities, establishing staffing patterns, and developing educational program objectives. The principal's managerial functions expand in the areas of personnel management, business management, facilities maintenance, property management, security, counseling, communication, and community relations. (p. 189)

Negroni (2000) outlined how the expansion of responsibilities in an SBM/SBDM milieu was problematic when he stated that "principals have become increasingly focused on managing systems, keeping buildings, schools and the business of education moving," and cited Elmore's conclusion that principals "only infrequently have been involved in teaching and learning" (p. 16). Negroni concluded that managerial functions continue to consume principals' "time at the boundaries of teaching and learning," which is the "core of instructional matters" (p. 17), and which should be the focus of the principal.

Marsh reinforced Negroni's conclusion by citing Caldwell and Spinks (1992); Murphy and Louis (1994); and Odden (1995) who confirmed that the role of the principal had changed dramatically:

> The ideal principal in the 1980s was an instructional leader who focused on four key elements of reform…. Recent studies from many countries, however, report that school principals did not actually carry out this role, and conclude that the role may no longer be appropriate for contemporary schools. In synthesizing this research, Murphy (1994) points to dramatic changes in the work environment including a turbulent policy environment, and overwhelming scale and pace of change, and a new view of teacher involvement and expertise. The result has been role ambiguity of massive proportions for the school principal. The same summary of research on the school principal also captured the role overload for school principals. They report that the job is much more difficult than expected, that a new repertoire of skills is needed to function effectively, and that they have significantly changed their pattern of behavior. (1997, pp. 2-3)

Sergiovanni expanded upon the management responsibilities of the principal when he cited James Lipham (1964) who believed that the following jobs of the principal were management functions rather than leadership:

> To coordinate, direct, and support the work of others – is accomplished by defining objectives, evaluating performance, providing the necessary resources, building a supportive climate, running interference with parents, planning, scheduling, bookkeeping, resolving teaching conflicts, handling student problems, dealing with the school district central office, and otherwise helping to keep the school running day by day. (as cited in Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 16)

Lipham's finding were consistent with the findings in a study of *Workload and Worklife of Saskatchewan Teachers* completed in 1997 and cited in the *Administrative Review Final Report* (2001) published by Meyers Norris Penney (MNP). In that report the authors indicated, "Some principals estimated that a significant proportion of their administrative time (in some cases at least 50%) was spent on student discipline" and working with parents to resolve these situations (as cited in MNP, 2001, p. 81).

Peterson (1978) stated that principals engaged predominantly in service, advisory, and auditing relationships and that they tended not to be directly involved in the workflow at the classroom level. This study also revealed that principals did not involve themselves to any great extent in classroom observation, curriculum development, and staff development. That is, they were not involved in the core instructional aspect of the school as management functions increased.

Morris, Crowson, Herwitz, and Porter-Gehrie (1982) confirmed that instructional leadership, by any definition, was not the central focus of the principalship, at least not in modern schools. Lortie (1975) pointed out that this was, however, the function that teachers wanted principals to perform. Teachers wanted principals to support and facilitate their work in the classroom. Seyfarth (1991) cited Bowers and Seashore as confirming this support for teachers and teaching when they indicated that leadership practices displayed by principals of effective schools were of four types:

> 1. Work facilitation, which involves scheduling, planning, and coordinating
> 2. Support, which involves actions that enhance teachers' and students' feelings of personal worth and importance
> 3. Interaction facilitation, which includes behaviour that encourages teachers to develop close, mutually satisfying working relations
> 4. Goal emphasis, which involves behaviours that arouse teachers' enthusiasm for attaining instructional goals and achieving excellence in performance. (p. 16)

In summarizing the research on the principalship, Greenfield (1982) found consistently that the principalship was highly interpersonal, full of ambiguous and conflicting expectations, possessed of considerable latitude in responding to situations, and confronted by a diverse range of problems, many of which were out of the principal's direct influence. Considerable doubt existed as to whether principals were instructional leaders and whether they could be, as managerial functions increased in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

### The importance of democratic instructional leadership

Giroux (1996) added to the complexity of the principal's role when he stated that it was important in a democracy to have a citizenry that could "think critically, struggle against social injustices, and develop relations of community based on the principles of equality, freedom, and justice" (p. 297). Harrison and Kachur argued that, "public education is inseparable from broader moral, economic, and political issues, in particular the construction of a democratic community and a just society" (1999, p. xv). Wilson, et al. (2001) stated, "public education" in a democracy "must develop the collective capacity for members to create possibilities for resolving problems" (p. 64). Beane and Apple (1995) said that:

> In a democratic school … all of those directly involved in the school, including young people, have the right to participate in the process of decision making. For this reason, democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making. Committees, councils and other school-wide decision-making groups include not only professional educators, but also young people, their parents, and other members of the school community … democratic planning, at both the school and classroom levels, is not the 'engineering of consent' toward predetermined decisions that has too often created the illusion of democracy, but a genuine attempt to honour the right of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives. (p. 9)

Such beliefs and the values they represent had significant implications for leadership. If principals were to play a role in the development of a citizenry that could think critically and struggle against social injustice, principals had to ensure that students were active participants in the learning and decision making process, which is consistent with the Deweyan concept of transaction, or of active participation in what is to be learned. Active participants make deliberate judgments as part of the sense-making process. To achieve the sense-making process principals needed to ensure that teachers facilitated that process by involving students in critical thinking activities.

Freire (1974) noted "problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of consciousness…" which "strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality" [italics in original] (p. 62). Freire went further and said that "in problem-posing education, men [sic] develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" [italics in original] (p.64).

Students are not currently active participants in a problem posing education that enables them to critically reflect on the way they exist in the world. The focus of program change and student involvement initiatives, therefore, directly relates to the role of the principal as an instructional leader, which was counter to the findings of some researchers. Giroux (1996) stressed the importance of developing a citizenry that could think critically. Calabrese and Barton (1994) stated that schools were the renewal agents of democratic societies, and the educational leaders in those institutions were charged with the responsibility of ensuring that renewal was continuous. They went further and stated that: "The renewal of a democracy is the primary task of each generation, who must redefine what it means to live in a democracy" (p. 3). Sergiovanni cited Nothwehr (1998) who stated: "Mutuality is an important concept in a democratic society…. It implies the authentic shaping of power-with, by, and among members in a society in a way that recognizes the fundamental dignity of each and the obligation to attain and maintain for each what is necessary to sustain that dignity" (2000, p. 89).

Democratic renewal was more than just teaching about democracy. Calabrese and Barton (1994) argued that there was a need to kindle the "spirit in the young that they have a responsibility to shape the evolving direction of their democracy. They have a responsibility to build a democracy that is more inclusive, more just, more fair, more equitable, more responsible, and more open than that of their parents" (1994, p. 3). In order to ensure that students shape the evolving direction of their democracy, students needed to become active participants in the learning and decision-making process as opposed to passive recipients. To ensure that students were active participants, principals had to facilitate instructional leadership by encouraging teachers to become reflective practitioners who engaged students and helped them to become active participants in the learning and decision-making process.

Principals engaged in "reflection on practice" so that they provided dramatic, creative and rigorous leadership. That dramatic, creative and rigorous leadership was needed, as participatory democracy is an integral part of SBM/SBDM. In order to successfully implement SBM/SBDM there must be "collaboration between the principal, superintendent, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, and the community" (Alberta Learning, 1996, p. 1). Collaboration is a "mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 5).

Smith and Piele (1996) pointed out that the challenge for the principal "is to determine how much decision-making authority parents should have…" to date unfortunately parent participation "is often token" (pp. 192-193). As for students, they were generally the "least consulted" of all stakeholders (Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 193). What participatory democracy and the necessary collaboration entailed for the principal, was the effective involvement of a variety of stakeholders in the decision making process. "Collaborative leaders are sustained by their deeply democratic belief that people have the capacity to create their own visions and solve their own problems" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 146). The focus was on the principal as the key educational leader who "more than any other single individual, will determine the success or failure of" SBM/SBDM "at the building level…. Rather than diminishing the role of the principal," SBM/SBDM "actually enhances it. However, it also calls for a more complex and sophisticated role of the principal" (Reynold, 1997, pp. 66-67).

### The active/passive curriculum challenge facing democratic instructional leaders

The enormity of this challenge revolved around curricula. That was so because if the curricula being used did not foster students becoming active participants in the learning and decision-making process, then principals needed to participate in curriculum or instructional transformation. There was ample evidence that supported the belief that the present curricula did not foster students becoming active participants in the learning process. Clifford, Ditchburn, Evans, Partridge, Klinck and Washburn (1992) found that, "in general, we felt that modern schooling practices do little to foster the reflective and contemplative side of life and that ironically principals themselves may be the first casualties of a system they now unwittingly propagate" (p. 30). They found that "many students are bored, disenfranchised and angry about what is being done to them in the name of teaching and learning" (Clifford et al., 1992, p. 49). They also found that principals "acknowledge the right of children and young people to have a say in curriculum - to negotiate the choices, decisions and options available to them on a daily basis" (Clifford et al., 1992, p. 49).

These educational researchers presented evidence that there was a need for curriculum change. While evidence existed of a need for such change, change is not the sole right, nor responsibility of the principal. Leadership in education, and especially in a SBM/SBDM involved collaboration with a variety of stakeholders. Not every stakeholder agreed, however, to the need or direction change should take.

Democratic instructional leadership required leadership and planning that was based on the assumption that reflective action had the potential "for emancipating human beings from unnecessary social constraints on their freedom" (Macdonald, 1980, p. 5). Reflective action required answers to curriculum questions that involved issues regarding the exercise of adult power over young people, issues of social class, and race, issues of authority in a hierarchical system that reinforces not only where people are, but also where they belong. Principals and teachers who involved themselves in reflection on the values and beliefs of society did not undertaking a simple task. A school community involved in such work did, however, receive support and encouragement from those who showed concern about the present state of education. Henderson and Hawthorne (1995) were concerned that "far too many children are schooled and not educated" and that there was far too much "focus on organizational goals, economies, and efficiencies rather than meaningful student learning" and far too much "concentration on measurable outcomes rather than authentic learning experiences; over the systemic distrust of teachers, parents, and community members as active curriculum decision makers; and over the continuing confusion of equity and excellence in education" (p. 2). Wilson, et al. (2001) stated that the purpose of public schools was "to protect democracy – a democracy that is grounded in moral values and that enables different people to find unity of purpose in the day-to-day matter of community life" (p. 64). For principals the challenge to encourage democratic instructional leadership was significant, but even more so in a SBM/SBDM milieu since SBM/SBDM is founded on building consensus through participatory democracy. Building consensus through participatory democracy required that principals reflect on their leadership practices. Reflective principals "do not passively accept solutions and mechanically apply them. They do not assume that the norm is a one best way to practice, and they are suspicious of easy answers to complex questions" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 10).

## Emancipatory constructivism as part of democratic instructional leadership

Participatory democracy meant that leaders needed to be involved in emancipatory constructivism. That educational approach referred to constructivist educational practices that were directed not only to helping students become proactive members of a particular community of inquiry, but also encouraged them to advanced humanity. What was true for students, however, was also true for the educators who worked with those students, their parents and the school community. The challenge for principals was that they needed to lead by example and reflect on their beliefs about education and their leadership. For example, principals might consider whether they believe in the values of participatory democracy and the pedagogical role of emancipatory constructivism.

Emancipation was concerned with three interrelated forms of liberation: personal, social, and transpersonal. The focus of personal liberation was on the cultivation of self-worth, identity, authenticity, and self-actualization that was to occur during the learning process. Combs (1962) pointed out that "learning is personal, that things are learned only in the degree to which the learner discovers the unique meaning of things to his particular self" (p. 183). Principals, then, needed to be willing to provide the kind of democratic instructional leadership that engaged others to reflect on questions of social and cultural liberation, and the problems of equity, marginalization, and oppression. Such concerns were central to the critical tradition in educational theory and practice, and well documented by Freire (1970/1997) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1981).

Principals provided democratic instructional leadership by ensuring that teachers were the instructional leaders who engaged students in emancipatory practical inquiry. This inquiry involved both narrative knowing and pedagogical tact. Narrative knowing resulted from the sharing of curriculum experiences, the examination of values and the assumptions embedded in those occurrences. For example, principals might engage teachers in a dialogue on the values and assumptions embedded in the professionalization of teaching and the need to give voice to students and parents in the decision-making process. Pedagogical tactfulness was the increased sensitivity that educators demonstrated as they dealt with young people in everyday educational situations (van Manen, 1991, pp. 125-210). Narrative knowing and pedagogical tact referred, respectively, to the experiencing/meaning making and the doing/action sides of constructivist curriculum work.

Students involved in constructivist curriculum work practiced reflection. The purpose of that type of constructive educational criticism was to creatively illuminate the qualities of educational experience, while the goal of cultural criticism was to analyze deep-rooted problems of human insensitivity and injustice. Principals who practiced this type of democratic instructional leadership needed to be passionately committed to human rights, civil liberties, and developmental equity. They also needed to be committed to reflection on curricula, which fostered students becoming more active participants in the learning and decision-making process. “Confronting differences through personal conversation and deliberate interactions can enable [people] to find common ground” (Lambert, 2003, p. 19). Confronting differences and enabling people to find common ground required extensive use of dialogue. Lambert stated that the purpose of dialogue “is understanding, when we truly listen and build on each other’s ideas, we construct meaning and knowledge together” (2003, p. 23).

## Reflection on curricula by democratic instructional leaders

In general, much of curriculum practice did not actively support reflection on curricula. This might have been due to the way the present system is deeply rooted in “technical rationality – a linear, cause and effect, measurable, and rationally controlled way of thinking and making judgements about who ought to learn what, how, when, where, for how long and why" (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995, p. 9). Clifford et al. (1992) pointed out that "the current view of curriculum is of a body of pre-established facts-to-be-known, skills-to-be-mastered, and values-to-be-inculcated; that is, the 'stuff' that is delivered to students. The emerging view sees curriculum as an entire set of experiences and web of relationships with the pedagogic good of the child at the centre. In the emerging paradigm, the curriculum is everything and everyone the student experiences in the school" (p. 1).

The constructivist interpretation of curriculum focused on teachers' and students' actual educational experiences as they constructed meanings over past, present, and anticipated future learning activities. As Brooks and Brooks (1993) noted, the goal of constructivist practices was to promote "deep understanding, not imitative behavior" (p. 16). Democratic instructional leaders who reinforced constructivist practice ensured that teachers focused on the ability of students to demonstrate comprehension of concepts, solve problems imaginatively, and their ability to inquire into complex issues.

The role of the democratic instructional leader in a SBM/SBDM milieu, therefore, was to ensure that educators involved themselves in continuous reflection on pedagogical practice. This meant that educators questioned personal beliefs, cultural beliefs and related social structures.

> It is clear that the effort to transform a school into a professional learning community is more likely to be sustained when teachers participate in reflective dialogue; observe and react to one another's teaching; jointly develop curriculum and assessment practices; work together to implement new programs and strategies; share lesson plans and materials; and collectively engage in problem

> solving, action research, and continuous improvement practices. (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, pp. 117-118)

A sincere commitment to a strong pluralistic democracy required such a willingness and dedication on the part of teachers, principals and parents. This was not simple, but it was essential to a clear understanding of the raison d'etre of schooling.

> The "raison d'être" of schools is learning. It is therefore essential that school staffs engage in an ongoing dialogue on learning. That is, time needs to be spent examining personal beliefs and knowledge about learning, reaching consensus on what we in this school know and believe about the nature of learning, and then examining our teaching practices to determine the degree to which they reflect what we know and believe about learning. (La Rose, 1988, p. 5)

This personal and professional reflection did not occur until democratic instructional leaders altered working conditions and provided the necessary supports for proper reflection on learning and teaching practices. Teachers did not alter basic attitudes through rational argumentation, nor did they jump on a bandwagon reform because they heard a good argument for educational constructivism. In the publication *Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions* (March, 1994) the Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA] pointed out that:

> It is generally agreed that a primary cause of the failure of many "reforms" is the failure to win the support or commitment of teachers; too often these changes have been administratively mandated ventures that were not asked for, approved of, or supported by teachers. In a more professional, collegial and democratic school setting, teachers are far more likely to be looking constantly for ways to improve their practice. In addition, because part of it is ***their*** decision, the outcome is genuine commitment, with resulting improvement in the education of children [bolding and italics in original]. (March, 1994, p. 8)

In a complex pluralistic democratic society such as the one in which we live, it is to be expected that there will be alternative conceptions and arguments about what constitutes the most appropriate education for children. Such conversations were essential if a democratic instructional leader was to be a transformative leader. When a constructivist perspective was adopted it inverted the form-function equation. Sergiovanni stated:

> Instead of beginning with a form for schooling, and trying then to fit what we are trying to do into the categories provided, we begin with what we know about teaching and learning, and what we want to accomplish for children and parents. With these as the framework, we then design outward, seeking to create forms of organizational structure, curriculum, and teaching and learning that fit the functions. (1996, p. 38)

Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning that was interpreted by those involved in education as they designed school structures, organization, teaching and learning experiences. Democratic instructional leaders practiced what they preached and it was fundamentally important for teachers to be involved in reflection if they were to spend time examining their personal beliefs and knowledge about learning. Democratic instructional leaders needed to make time for teachers to reach consensus on the nature of learning in order to examine teaching practices and curricula to determine the degree to which practice reflected what was known and believed about learning, and whether curricula supported that understanding. “Teaching cannot be standardized…teachers cannot become effective by following scripts…the need to create *knowledge in use* as they practice…. This ability requires a higher level of reflection, understanding, and skill than that offered in the guise of technical-rational authority” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 35). Taking time to reflect on teaching practice and curricula was an essential part of instructional leadership by teachers and transformational leadership by democratic instructional leaders.

### Transformational leadership and its importance to democratic instructional leadership

Burns (1979) argued that transformational leaders promoted the empowerment of their co-workers by establishing a social environment that fostered "principled levels of judgement" (p. 455). "The role of leadership in collaboration is to engage others by designing constructive processes for working together, convene appropriate stakeholders, and facilitate and sustain their interaction" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 127). Transformational leaders ensured that co-workers were empowered even though Henderson and Hawthorne (1995); Clifford et al. (1992); and Brooks and Brooks (1993) expressed significant concerns that a curriculum built upon a technical-rational foundation could not be fine-tuned enough to ensure inquiry by students. The technical-rational foundation is based on a linear, cause and effect process that is measurable and fosters a rationally controlled way of thinking and making judgments about the learning process. As such it does not foster the "capacity of human beings to understand themselves and their worlds, to grow emotionally, socially, physically and cognitively" (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995, p. 9). Teachers and principals acting in ways that reinforced the technical-rational approaches could not nurture students to be creative and to thrive in a society that cherished diversity and a democracy "that enhances individual and social emancipation" (Wilson, et al., 2001, p. 64).

Yet the delegation of power and authority in SBM/SBDM does not give democratic instructional leaders the right to "impose" their beliefs upon people living in a democratic society who entrust their children into the care of educators. This is so because there are many educators and parents who do not wish to question the tacit rules of the present technical rational paradigm. Many educators and parents were educated according to the principles of the existing paradigm and may see no reason for change. The power and authority delegated in SBM/SBDM does, however, give democratic instructional leaders the right to engage stakeholders in a deep conversation about education and through the vehicle of participatory democracy arrive at decisions that have been achieved through consensus as people engage in the collaborative decision making process. Such a collaborative decision-making process is reflective of Roland Barth's community of leaders concept. "The community of leaders language was introduced into education by Roland Barth (1988) as an interactive process of shared leadership" (Lambert, 1995, p. 16). Barth (1988), Glickman (1993) and Schlechty (1990) all talked about leadership being shared with professional staff, and in such situations the principal was viewed as a "leader of leaders" (as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 16). Lambert (1995) went on to state that the traditional hierarchical structure gets replaced and under such circumstances there was a shared responsibility for school governance, professional growth, and the achievement of goals that have been agreed to and developed collaboratively.

Transformational leaders needed to be cognizant that some educators who, in the past, chose to change their paradigm experienced great discomfort with the ambiguity that existed within other paradigms. All too often those educators returned to the comfort and familiarity of the technical-rational approach to curriculum. Transformational leaders who tried to implement change by ensuring that educators were involved in reflection on practice found groups of educators choosing to deal with surface issues rather than the deeper issues of core values and beliefs. "Well-meaning though we were, our group was unable to reflect critically on core values about what we do with children" (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995, p. 49).

The formula-driven Tyler rationale is linear and sequential, and as such, is a comfortable road map laid out for teachers and principals. That comfort is provided by the security and feeling of control that teachers and principals possess in implementing the curriculum. The instructional leader knew what to do and in what order based on a curriculum that had "pre-established facts-to-be-known, skills-to-be-mastered, and values-to-be-inculcated" (Clifford et al., 1992, p. 1). In the technical-rational approach to curriculum planning, any challenge was a problem that could be solved with the proper organizational tool and the adherence to a step-by-step process. The principal schooled to be an efficiency expert provides leadership in such task-oriented settings. Teachers in such settings in turn share the principal's unquestioned faith that the setting can and should be controlled at all times to maintain the efficiency needed. "This implies that persons within such settings must be controlled and monitored in the interests of efficiency" (Brubaker, 1994, p. 14).

A non-technical-rational approach encouraged more collaborative construction. Such a process was far less step-by-step and more emergent in nature. This issue of control was less obvious as teachers worked with students to create learning opportunities. The teacher did not necessarily know what to do and in what order to achieve a particular end. Democratic instructional leaders engaged in transformational leadership practice to stimulate teacher engagement in reflection on practice. Reflection on practice did not yield a step-by-step formula to improvement. But as Leithwood et al., (1999) stated, "transformational leadership is a powerful stimulant to improvement. *Vision building, developing consensus about group goals, providing intellectual stimulation and individual support, culture building* and *contingent reward* were the leadership dimensions that most accounted for this stimulation" (p. 37). Leithwood et al., stated further that transformational leadership aimed to "stimulate organizational members to think reflectively and critically about their own practices, and to provide appropriate models of the practices and values considered central to the organization" (1999, p. 183). This non-prescriptive process was very unsettling for teachers trained in the technical-rational approach to curriculum implementation. But transformational leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu was critical to achieve democratic instructional leadership. Leithwood et al. pointed out, "Transformational leaders demonstrated strong reflective dispositions, which enabled them to learn from experience, a factor that appears to contribute to their success" (1999, p. 179).

### The challenge associated with transformational leadership

Transformational leaders in a SBM/SBDM milieu faced enormous challenges in dealing with a wide variety of staff. There were experienced teachers who used traditional approaches, teachers fresh from undergraduate teaching programs who believed in developmentally appropriate practice, and other teachers who were schooled in a behaviorist paradigm. Each group of teachers, and a wide variety of others, brought a different perspective to any discussion based on their particular system of beliefs.

Transformational leaders needed to remember that some teachers had experienced conflict when new initiatives were implemented in schools. Such conflicts were the result of philosophical differences, or for a variety of other reasons. Transformational leaders in such situations often tried to bring teachers together to identify common beliefs and beliefs they do not share. Under such circumstances teachers often agreed, in principle, to many of the tenets of a particular belief.

Generally the differences that emerged during such conversations centred on teaching philosophies, parental expectations, and the teacher's belief about the nature of students. Transformational leaders sometimes viewed such meetings as a forum that allowed teachers to question each other's beliefs and to state their own. The philosophical tug of war that ensued often intensified as these meetings progressed. Transformational leaders experienced a great deal of frustration in such meetings because they perceived them to be confrontational and value-ladened. Nevertheless, the openness and trust required to engage in public values deliberation, a key aspect of reflection, needed to be established if a productive participatory democracy was to flourish.

Another challenge to participatory democracy was the way that some transformational leaders utilized group meetings to resolve differences. In such a forum, the leader's request for teacher involvement did not always convince all teachers that they had real power to make changes. Many teachers' felt that what the participants decided did not really matter since the administration would often make the final decision in the end anyway. Transformational leaders who engaged staff in participatory decision-making adhered to democratic decision-making principles. The top-down decision-making approach is contrary to democratic participatory decision-making principles.

Too many teachers have experienced top-down reform. Sarason (1990) pointed out that billions of dollars have been spent on top-down reform with little to show for it. Sarason presented considerable evidence that showed that such reform efforts have an implicit theory of change:

> [Change] can come about by proclaiming new policies, or by legislation, or by new performance standards, or by creating a shape-up-or-ship-out ambience, or all of the preceding. It is a conception that in principle is similar to how you go about creating and improving an assembly line - that is, what it means to those who work on the assembly line is of secondary significance, if it has any significance at all. The workers (read: educational personnel) *will* change [italics in original]. (1990, p. 123)

Chrislip and Larson (1994) pointed out "when reforms are pushed through legislative or administrative bodies and become 'mandates' to school systems, little attention is given to implementation. Resistance to change within the implementing institutions thwarts even the most laudable goals" (p. 7).

Some teachers involved in reflection on practice felt their colleagues never really got down to the fundamental issues, such issues as values and how values translate into curriculum. Those teachers often questioned the standard school definition of success. Such teachers wanted answers to questions like: What do we really want our children to learn? Why do we want them to learn it? These teachers often said very little during such meetings because they felt their colleagues and administration would consider their questions and ideas irrelevant or counterproductive. They feared ridicule, which was a great silencer. Transformational leaders understood that, "Building a shared vision is the ongoing, never-ending, daily challenge confronting all those who hope to transform their schools into learning communities. The key to meeting that challenge is not to impose a vision on an unwilling faculty, but rather to help faculty members identify common causes, interests, goals, and aspirations" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, pp. 65-66).

Yet some teachers' feared such public deliberation that explored a culture's idea of success. They felt that such exploration of values indicated that the school-community was not supportive of such exploration and reflection. For most parents and educators, the definition of success was inculcated into them by the society in which they lived. "We have based our parenting and teaching on a definition of 'success' as educational and economic advantage" (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995, p. 48).

A primary task of transformational leaders then, was to stimulate individual and staff initiatives in reflection, creative thinking and learning. "This entails helping colleagues to see themselves as having the ability to contribute effectively to curriculum development and the confidence to carry it forward" (Day, Hall, Gammage & Coles. 1993, p. 29). As Clifford et al. (1992) pointed out; "in the emerging paradigm, principals start their talk about curriculum in quite different places. They raise questions about issues that are accepted as 'givens' in the current paradigm: questions about who and what schools are for, about the rights of children to have a voice in curriculum decision-making, about whether school learning is significant learning" (p. 46).

This was a significant challenge for transformational leaders in a SBM/SBDM milieu. This was because in such a milieu, transformational leaders and the staff with whom they worked were delegated the authority to initiate changes that needed to improve learning and increase the levels of student achievement. With that authority came the requisite accountability. Chion-Kenney (1994) pointed out the significance of accountability in SBM/SBDM when she referred to an assistant superintendent's statement that SBM/SBDM "is the best thing to happen to public education in a long time because it's going to sharpen our ability to hold professionals in the field of education accountable for how well kids are learning" (p. 12).

Transformational leaders lived with multiple discourses and the realization that disagreement with a particular discourse did not make it illegitimate. This was one reason why transformative leadership is complex and politically challenging work designed to facilitate constructivism. Despite the recent historical dominance of the technical rational interpretation of instructional leadership, constructivist educational reform still shows much promise. Constructivist educational reform provides an opportunity for fundamental curriculum change, and a broader and more inclusive definition of success.

This promise did not come without criticism. Those who advocated understanding as a primary interest of instructional leadership were criticized in many different ways. Brubaker presented some of the criticism of the liberation point of view. The following is a summary:

> 1. Bureaucratic structures in our society simply will not tolerate moving beyond understanding to action. The fabric of our society will not take the pushing and shoving that we endured in the 1960's.
> 2. We are so locked into technical processes in our society that liberation processes will not fit. The person who practices liberation and emancipation will surely be a social misfit.
> 3. Few leaders are capable of integrating theory and practice. Praxis, reflective action, is an ideal that is too demanding in the real world. (1994, pp. 18-19)

The transformational leader's lifeworld is a political milieu constrained by the realities of limited resources and conflicting preferences over means and ends. Transformational leaders can be instrumental in exercising power and authority and thereby shaping the school and the meaning it holds in the experiences of children, teachers, and members of the community. "When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar 'vision statement'), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to" (Senge, 1990, p. 9). However, principals will be forever confronted by the necessity to balance the good that might be achieved immediately with that which might be obtained over time. Transformational leaders had to decide when to move forward, when to hold fast and when to step back, constantly aware of the balance among short- and long - term cost and gains.

With this in mind then, research on effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu must give some consideration to transformational leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Principals, as transformative leaders in such a milieu, embrace a view of the mission of education different from the technical-rational perspective. The content and spirit of transformative leadership places greater emphasis on the education of a democratic community and less focus on the narrow view of an education associated with too much focus on regaining economic primacy. A transformative leader is concerned more with liberation than with domination. Such a leader is more concerned with participatory democracy and with the development of communities that discuss and debate competing educational values than with the creation of a professional workforce that is encouraged to use its professional ingenuity to accomplish uniform provincial or national goals. Transformational leaders are concerned about issues associated with power and power sharing.

> Power can be understood in two ways – as power *over*, and as power *to*…. Power *over* emphasizes controlling what people do, when they do it, and how they do it. Power *to* views power as a source of energy for achieving shared goals and purposes. Indeed, when empowerment is successfully practiced, administrators exchange power *over* for power *to*. Power *over* is rule-bound, but power *to* is goal-bound. (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 280)

Principals, be they in centralized or decentralized settings, are ultimately responsible for the implementation of any reform be that program, practice or idea. Harrison and Kachur believed that "public education is a fundamental element in the establishment, maintenance, and transformation of democratic citizenship, not only through *what* is taught, but through the process of *how* things are taught and as the means for understanding and transforming the unequal conditions of social existence" [italics in original] (1999, p. xxxi). This raises the importance of ensuring that schools are effective democratic learning organizations. Senge (1990) stated: "The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels in an organization" (p. 4). A learning organization requires instructional leadership that is a shared responsibility.

## Instructional leadership is leadership that ensures shared responsibility

Henderson and Hawthorne (1995) stated that, "emancipatory constructivism requires a practical wisdom or deliberative artistry involving pedagogical sensitivity, subject-matter expertise, flexibility, imagination, and critical alacrity" (p. 50). This was not only true of many teachers but it was also true of the leadership practices of principals. Many teachers possessed these personal and professional qualities. What principals involved in transformational leadership did was provide better support, encouragement and development opportunities for such teachers. If principals are to be successful as transformative leaders, they must ensure that teachers are allowed to develop and function as instructional leaders. Professional assistance must be provided to teachers who want to function as instructional leaders and many other teachers must be encouraged and supported to become instructional leaders. "The school that operates as a professional *learning* community recognizes that its members must engage in the ongoing study and constant practice that characterize an organization committed to continuous improvement" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii). Klein et al., (1996), and Adelman and Panton Walking Eagle (1997) were cited as having stated: "Providing school personnel with adequate time to work through the problems associated with change is a crucial factor in successful reform…. Nevertheless, the time essential for reform is often not made readily available for school personnel" (as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1999, p. 111).

Transformational leaders knew that there were some teachers who spent their careers in relative isolation from others in their profession, who were, therefore, apprehensive about change, and defensive and protective of their teaching. Sirotnik (1994) and Griffin (1995) were cited as having concluded that: "A frequently identified obstacle to the development of teacher leadership is the isolated professional culture common in schools, along with associated norms of egalitarianism, privacy, politeness and contrived collegiality" (as cited in Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 131). Teachers in such circumstances lacked a risk - taking, growth - oriented process approach.

Transformational leaders who were "concerned with staff development" recognized "this and, whilst not losing sight of the need to promote change and a recognition that conflict is an inherent part of the change process," acknowledged " colleagues' concerns, fears and anxieties" (Day et al. 1993, p. 15). It was important that teachers became instructional leaders for a wide variety of reasons, but a fundamental reason was that the importance of transformational instructional leadership could not be underestimated. "The notion of 'instructional leadership' returns the leadership construct back to its educative and pedagogic foundations" (Clifford et al. 1992, p. 130). Building an individual's and school's capacity to learn was critical as "individual growth is essential for organizational growth to occur, [however] it does not guarantee organizational growth. Thus, building a school's capacity to learn is a *collaborative* rather than an *individual* task" [italics in original] (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 27).

In constructivist learning, the student was the active meaning-making agent. Teachers as instructional leaders ensured that the vision of the student as a person becoming an individual and a member of a strong democratic culture was integrated into the curriculum. This necessitated work by instructional leaders that maintained curriculum work that was student-focused. Kaye (1991) said "a democratic education must involve not just a process of transmission and inculcation of ideas and ideals but, also, an experience of engaging, working through, and possibly even transforming them" (as cited in Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995, p. 129). Freire stated "we should not call on people to come to the school to receive instruction, recipes, threats, reprehension and punishment, but to participate collectively in the construction of knowledge" (as cited in Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995, p. 46).

Transformational leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu required that principals were more inclusive and collaborative. This was clearly indicated in the background statement to Alberta Education's School-Based Decision Making policy 1.8.2. That statement reads as follows:

> Under Section 15 of the *School Act* and the direction set by the *Three-Year Business Plan*, the principal is the key educational leader at the school level, who will provide leadership in successful school-based decision making. Principals must work with parents, teachers and members of the community to establish a school-based decision making process to develop school policies and budgets as well as to establish the scope of school program and extra-curricular activities [italics in original]. (1996, p. 1)

Such SBM/SBDM processes and any committees that were formed represented the diversity of the student body, the school faculty, and the larger community that the school served. For their part, "teachers recognize the inherent unfairness of a system that asks them to be accountable for results, but provides them with little or no opportunity to make the decisions that affect those results. Effective organizations link responsibility and authority…." (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 153). A number of studies demonstrated that in an SBM/SBDM milieu the traditional instructional leadership role of the principal was altered significantly. Weber found that, "recent studies of instructional leadership have… moved from describing… organizations whose instructional leaders were captains… to describing organizations with multiple leaders drawn from… the faculty [that is] being given increasing responsibilities in site-based-management schemes for areas of school governance previously reserved for administration" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1997, pp. 253-254).

Transformational leaders worked with colleagues, parents and students in an SBM/SBDM milieu as partners. Such leaders demonstrated their ability in order to earn the trust and respect of others. "There was no 'automatic right to lead' such as that implied by the title of, for example, Head or Deputy" (Day et al., 1993, p. 16); or for that matter, teacher. The title of principal or teacher provided an individual with an opportunity to demonstrate to others that they were truly partners in the decision-making process. It was clear that the principal acting as a transformational leader in a SBM/SBDM milieu needed to "act as process rather than task expert in developing partnerships" (Day et al., 1993, p. 17).

For their part, transformational leaders worked with colleagues, parents and students to learn again what it meant to encourage, support, and challenge those with whom they worked. The reason for this was because teachers felt "strongly that the present way in which educational innovations and developments are implemented is deeply flawed. One of the major criticisms is that, as professionals, they are often not even consulted, let alone given a chance to approve or disapprove" (ATA, 1994, p. 14). Clifford et al. (1992) confirmed this belief when they stated, "getting wind of another 'new and improved' brand of educational innovation, ... teachers put their heads down and wait for the whole storm to blow over, as they sense it inevitably will. Or they get their backs up" (p. 78). For his part Fullan (1993) said,

> we have an educational system which is fundamentally conservative. The way that teachers are trained, the way that schools are organized, the way that the

> educational hierarchy operates, and the way that education is treated by political decision-makers results in a system that is more likely to retain the *status quo* than to change. When change is attempted under such circumstances it results in defensiveness, superficiality or at best short-lived pockets of success [italics in original]. (p. 3)

Transformational leaders needed to be very cognizant of those beliefs and ensured that when they facilitated the implementation of school improvement initiatives these issues were addressed. Transformational leaders understood that "the principalship was a role that people occupy. Roles do not exercise leadership; people do. And some of the people who exercise the strongest leadership in any school district are in the classrooms" (Clifford et al., 1992, p. 117). The transformational leader contributed to a learning organization by modeling learning. As Barth stated: "The more crucial role of the principal is as *head learner*, engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse – experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do" [italics in original] (1990, p. 46).

A principal involved in transformational leadership who believed in democratic values understood that making unilateral decisions was inconsistent with the principles of participatory democracy. SBM/SBDM "is not only about democratic governance;" it is also about achieving "collaborative work environments in which those closest to the situation work together, without hierarchical status, to identify and answer the critical questions of how to educate students better" (Chion-Kenney, 1994, pp.18-19). Principals who wanted to be involved in transformational leadership ensured that all stakeholders had a voice in the democratic decision making process. This meant extensive involvement in a collaborative, inclusive decision-making process that empowered and did not disempower. SBM/SBDM required leadership that saw the "demise of command and control and the call for transformational leadership" (Chion-Kenney, 1994, p. 51). Blase, et al. (1995) pointed out, "building trust with teachers was central to empowering them and implementing viable shared-governance structures in schools" (p. 134).

It was essential that transformational leaders understood that the essence of such leadership was the inquiry about curriculum enactment as envisioned and as experienced. Teachers shared, interpreted, and critiqued what was planned and what was happening in their classrooms with their colleagues, parents and students. "Commitment to exemplary practice means practicing at the edge of teaching, by staying abreast of new developments, researching one's practice, trying out new approaches.... In a sense, it means accepting responsibility for one's own professional development" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 53). Such openness required a learning environment that was supportive, accepting, tolerant, inclusive, just, fair, equitable, and responsible. Transformational leaders encouraged this kind of openness in teachers by engaging "in practices intended *to reinforce key values*: the basic values of respect for others; trust in the judgement of one's colleagues;" and "integrity"[italics in original] (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999, p. 80). Such transformational leadership encouraged and supported good teaching. Hilte cited Greene (1985) and Giroux (1989) as having stated that good teaching supported "cultural diversity...." and helps "students to understand the democratic principles that shape our society while questioning practices that lead to the inequitable distribution of knowledge, power and resources" (as cited in Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995, p. 103). Hilte went further and said that good teaching created "a positive atmosphere for dialogue, reflection and debate" and "good teachers encourage the development of intellectual skills that lead to critical, reflective thinking" (as cited in Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995, p. 103). Within this constructivist paradigm, instructional leaders cultivated the ability to create dissonance, to force issues back to first principles, to help people see beneath the surface of their everyday work in schools.

Transformational leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu developed relationships that inspired teachers to "commit their minds, hearts and spirits to the cause of educational growth" (Clifford et al., 1992, p. 74). It is simply a truism that educators exist within school organizations, and their attitudes are part of the larger mindset. "Occasionally, there is a radical change in an educator's mindset, something that may be called a *paradigm shift*" [italics in original] (Brubaker, 1994, p. 65). Principals as transformational leaders actively worked to be creative leaders who used their talents to help others identify and use their talents and to enable such paradigm shifts.

Enabling leadership was transformational and it was visionary. "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn" (Senge, 1990, p.139). Senge expanded upon this idea further and pointed out: "People learn most rapidly when they have a genuine sense of responsibility for their actions" (1990, p. 287). Responsibility for their actions such that there was the creation of a leadership culture that promoted the expression of the ideal vision through the repeated and rigorous scrutiny of values. " It is the intersection of individual and societal values as they are experienced by the major stakeholders in the entire school community" (Day et al., 1993, p. 28).

## Rationale for Research

There appears to be a void in the literature and research regarding what effective leadership practices should be for principals in the SBM/SBDM milieu. Studies have examined leadership behaviour in schools determined to be effective (Chrispeels & Meaney, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989), and in organizations determined to be effective (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; & Peters & Waterman, 1982). Those studies, however, took place in traditional centralized decision-making settings, not in the non-traditional SBM/SBDM settings. In addition, Sergiovanni pointed out that, "The topic of leadership represents one of social science's greatest disappointments. After fifty year of steady work, social science can tell us very little about the subject" (1992, p. 2).

Langlois and McAdams (1992) indicated that in an SBM/SBDM milieu "the magnitude of the challenges presented by social and cultural environments in which school leaders must function requires that administrative performance appraisal be given a far higher priority in the decade ahead" (p. 2). In the present educational environment, it would seem that the magnitude of these challenges requires that effective leadership practices of principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu be given far greater priority. As such, it is imperative that this research be undertaken.

It is also significant to note that I have not been able to find any other action research where a Superintendent of Schools attempted to become involved in transformational leadership by taking an active role in the professional growth of principals by involving them in a collaborative action research project of this nature. This unique aspect of this study has the potential of making an important contribution to our understanding of effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu, and whether a Superintendent can engage in transformative leadership by exploring effective leadership practices with principals in their jurisdiction. In other words, this study also explores the professional development of principals in a school division.

This research also investigates the confusion regarding understandings of effective or successful schools and whether significant disagreement about the effective leadership practices of principals' in a traditional school setting exists, let alone those of a principal in a non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu.

Various studies establish that the leadership required of principals in a traditional educational setting is that of instructional leader. Evans, however, "sees instructional leadership as an impossible task for principals.... Principals are best placed for performing evaluations, but instructional leadership belongs to teachers, the district's specialists, or outside consultant" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 254). Yanitski and Pysyk (1999) stated that "the role of the school principal has changed *drastically* since educational restructuring began in Alberta in 1994" [italics added] (as cited in Harrison & Kachur, 1999, p. 165).

There exists, therefore, significant confusion about what leadership is and how leadership operates within schools. Chion-Kenney noted that when government's mandate SBM/SBDM, it only adds to the confusion and challenge for principals:

> Decentralization ... whether it involves shifting authority ... from the board room to the classroom, from the principal's office to the teachers' lounge, from professional circles to community councils, or some combination of them all, requires a structured relationship between two key concepts: site-based management – who runs the school – and shared decision making – who shapes the ideas that guide the school. (1994, p. 4)

Smith and Piele (1996) pointed out that despite the many benefits associated with SBM/SBDM the principal faces additional challenges as teachers become increasingly concerned and "fear the uncertainty that accompanies changing roles, and … question whether the time and effort is worth-while" (p. 193). Additional administrative burdens accompany SBM/SBDM and this concerns teachers and principals because more responsibilities and expectations are being passed on to those at the school level. As Chubb (1987) pointed out: "Excellence in education appears to be promoted by the principal who … steers clear of administrative burdens…." (p. 235). SBM/SBDM, however, increases significantly the administrative burdens of principals.

This research provides a professional growth opportunity for principals by giving them a chance to reflect on practice, on the definition of effectiveness, the ideologies behind school reform, and their understanding of effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu. By being involved in this research project, principals will have the opportunity to transform their leadership and by extension facilitate the provision of an enhanced education that will benefit students.

This research project is important in that there needs to be a clear understanding of the effective leadership practices of principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu. It will also allow the research participants, at a later date, to engage their colleagues in a conversation about effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu, so that we can reflect upon leadership and grow professionally as a Division through that reflective experience.

# Chapter 3

## Research Methodology

"The preferred method for natural science, since Galileo, has been detached observation, controlled experiment, and mathematical or quantitative measurement.... In contrast, the preferred method for human science involves description, interpretation, and self-reflective or critical analysis" (van Manen, 1991, p. 4). Traditional quantitative research has proven to be less than reliable at dealing effectively with the challenges of social research. Stringer (1996) stated that scientific methodology is "much less stable, objective, and generalizable than we had previously assumed" (p. 146). Action research, on the other hand, could be a useful method to explore with principals the question of what should effective leadership practices be for principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu, which is social inquiry. Elmore (2000) pointed out: "Organizations improve because they agree on what is worth achieving and then create processes that help employees learn what they need to meet these goals" (p. 9).

Stringer (1996) said that traditional research methodologies try to "predict and control…the physical world", but fail "to provide a means for predicting and controlling individual or social behavior" (p. 8). Collaborative action research utilizes constructions to create "realities that exist as integrated, systematic, 'sense-making' representations and are the stuff of which people's social lives are built. The aim of inquiry is not to establish the 'truth' or to describe what 'really' is happening, but to reveal the different truths and realities – constructions – held by different individuals and groups" (Stringer, 1996, p. 41).

Collaborative action research may also provide a means to alter work practices. Having principals reflect on leadership practices with the intention of improving them and then internalizing such changes into personal practice is one aspect of transformational leadership. Leithwood, et al. (1999) pointed this out when they stated that:

> Transformational leadership practices also aim to stimulate organizational members to think reflectively and critically about their own practices, and to provide appropriate models of the practices and values considered central to the organization. Holding high performance expectations, building shared norms and beliefs (culture) and structuring the organization to permit broad participation in decision making can also have important consequences.... (pp. 183-184)

Another concern with traditional research methodologies was the distance that must be adhered to in order for the researcher to maintain objectivity. Stringer (1996) stated, "without intimate knowledge of local context, one cannot hope to devise solutions to local problems" (p. x). Researchers involved in social inquiry seek to understand the mental constructions and mental interpretations of people. In order to do this the researcher must get close to the research subjects. Traditional research relegates the researcher to a position of emotional distance from the subjects involved in the study, but this means that it is increasingly difficult to achieve a true understanding of the participants' day-to-day lives. Huberman (1999) said that researchers' interactions with teachers have often consisted of a one-way flow of information that teachers and school officials find unhelpful to their work with students. He asserted that educators describe such research findings as unsuitable, inaccessible, overly simplistic or complex, or contradictory across studies (1999, pp. 289-319). Action research on the other hand moves the researcher, who becomes the action research facilitator, into close proximity to the research subjects who move from being objects of study to becoming co-researchers.

Another goal of action research was to ensure that co-researchers in an action research project are equal partners in the research process. Stringer (1996) stated that a "fundamental premise of community-based action research is that it commences with an interest in the problems of the research participants" (p. 9). One of the ways of ensuring action research participants are actively engaged, therefore, is to involve only those who are interested in the problem.

There were three additional reasons that supported the decision to use action research as the method of inquiry. The first reason was that action research allowed those involved in the project to focus on the initial question about leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu. It also allowed the participants, where necessary, to reinterpret and reconstruct the question. This was often necessary in order to achieve a better understanding of leadership. The second reason was that in order for this particular project to be successful and relevant for principals, they must be involved collaboratively as active participants, as co-researchers not objects to be observed. In the effective schools research and the correlational research on leadership in such schools, principals have been noticeably absent from the discourse about leadership. In order for SBM/SBDM to be successful, principals must become integrally involved in the discourse about SBM/SBDM leadership, for it is these same principals who are required to utilize effective leadership practices in such a milieu. Such participation on the part of principals is also consistent with the Deweyan concept of transaction or the active participation in what is being researched. The Deweyan concept of transaction was the third, and final reason and an important goal of this research project. That goal was for the research project to be a transformational learning opportunity for all participants. Action research has been shown to be an effective process through which the action research facilitator and co-researchers are provided with an opportunity to emerge from a project with a deeper self-understanding and potential for personal and professional transformation. The importance of a deeper self-understanding relates to the deep commitment needed for lasting change to occur. Cross and Rice (2000) pointed out that "many studies of effective leadership indicate that without commitment from the front-line leader (the principal, in the case of a school) it is impossible to achieve lasting change" (p. 61).

### Action research informed by hermeneutics

Action research is a research orientation that can employ a variety of theoretical discourses. One of the most promising theoretical discourses for this study is hermeneutics. The methodology of hermeneutics[15] is a theoretical discourse that may help educators critically reflect on the language and structure of the existing paradigm of education. Hermeneutics invites educators to alter their views of education in favour of less restrictive ways of conversing about curriculum and curriculum planning. Instructional leaders have to make effective use of hermeneutics to emphasize the student "as a creator, not just a consumer, of curriculum" (Brubaker, 1994, p. 16).

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[15] Hermeneutics is "the route to philosophical reflection, to reflection premised on the assumption that by following the indication of symbolic meaning one will arrive at a deeper understanding of human existence" (Ricoeur, 1981, p.6).

Engaging principals in a collaborative action research inquiry informed by hermeneutics to come to a deeper understanding of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu has the potential of being a positive growth experience. Interpretability is the opportunity that action research offers for interpreting the human experience at a personal level rather than having that interpretation provided to principals as preconceived ideas like those in the literature on effective schools and leadership in effective schools.

The action research facilitator's interpretative role is to help co-researchers interpret and understand the problems being faced by principals in the SBM/SBDM milieu. The facilitator collaborates with co-researchers to understand their personal xperiences in terms that make sense to them.

Boyett and Boyett (1998) stated that there is an "enormous volume of writing, research, videos, multimedia, and executive short-courses on leadership" and some leadership "gurus" claim that after working with their material a person will be "equipped with *all* of the information and answers you need to become an effective, inspiring leader" [italics in original] (p. 2). Such pre-packaged solutions and the related leadership literature have in many cases defined and interpreted the meaning of leadership and reported these as unquestionable truths and realities. As a path to a better understanding of leadership practices, action research brings with it the tradition of 'interpretative knowing'. Action research offers principals an opportunity to interpret practice and to create space for principals to produce new meanings and for understandings to emerge. Creating space was important so that the principals had an opportunity to produce meanings that were germane to them and were genuinely reflective of their lifeworld.

“Interpretative activity exposes the conceptual structures and pragmatic working theories that people use to explain their conduct” (Stringer, 1996, p.81). This was where action research was hermeneutic inquiry in that new understandings of leadership emerged as a result of a coming together of the researchers’ pre-understandings and the new understandings that emerged.

Thompson (1981/1995) stated that hermeneutics is a "route to philosophical reflection, to reflection premised on the assumption that by following the indication of symbolic meaning one will arrive at a deeper understanding of human existence" (p. 6). Arriving at a deeper understanding of the leadership lifeworld of principals who are held accountable for demonstrating effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu is critical, as a moral and professional obligation exists for Superintendents to assist all leaders within an organization to arrive at a deeper understanding of success and a broader definition of effectiveness.

### Questions about meaning

Two well-recognized hermeneutic scholars, Gadamer and Habermas, agreed that questions about meaning are an essential part of hermeneutics. They also agreed that such questions about meaning do not result in simple answers and therefore easy solutions. Not being able to arrive at simple answers is one reason why Gadamer maintained that hermeneutics must remain open ended, as there is no finality even when a genuine question is posed and a meaning is determined. There is no finality because meaning keeps evolving, as does the question. Hermeneutic action research focuses on questions that may involve the intention of a particular actor's motives, the actor’s purpose, or the context in which an actor is immersed. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated, "to identify these motives and intentions correctly is to grasp the 'subjective meaning' the action has to the actor" (p. 88). The actions of people embody the interpretation placed upon that action by the individual in question. The task of interpretative social science "is to discover these meanings and so make action intelligible" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 88). To discover meaning is to immerse oneself in the question, a question that evolves as does motive, intention, and context.

### Hermeneutic approaches

In his book *Hermeneutics and Education* (1992) Gallagher outlined four contemporary but different hermeneutical approaches. He termed these approaches conservative, moderate, radical, and critical hermeneutics (see Appendix D for details). Theorists such as Gadamer and Ricoeur developed moderate hermeneutics, which "proposes a somewhat optimistic view of interpretation. Interpretation involves creativity and not just reproduction; the reader participates, just as much as the author does, in putting together the meaning…." (Gallagher, 1992, pp. 9-12). The moderate hermeneutical approach has been adopted for this action research project because moderate theorist like Gadamer and Ricoeur recognized that there is no absolute guarantee of an objective interpretation of text. Researchers are constrained by their historical circumstance and the prejudices imbedded in language. Moderate hermeneutics is interpretation that involves creativity on the part of the action researchers who collaboratively interpret text and develop meaning together.

Critical hermeneutics is also relevant because as Gallagher stated it "is employed as a means of penetrating false consciousness, discovering the ideological nature of our belief systems, promoting distortion-free communication, and thereby accomplishing a liberating consensus (1992, pp. 9-12). Critical hermeneutics may help those involved in this action research project to penetrate what may very well be a false consciousness about leadership, effectiveness, democracy, and school reform initiatives, allowing the action researchers to discover the ideology behind the existing leadership paradigms and school reform initiatives.

Hermeneutics is a valuable theoretical discourse because as Gadamer pointed out, philosophical hermeneutics is wary of method and techniques as paths to understanding. He insisted "hermeneutics is a protection against the abuse of method" (Misgeld & Nicholson, 1992, p. 70). For Gadamer, "hermeneutics does not supply a specific method to be used in interpretation, but clarifies the conditions under which interpretation and the use of method can occur" (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 55). In his book, *The Hermeneutic Reader*, Mueller-Vollmer (1997) stated that, "instead of a method or the method of understanding, hermeneutics should better be conceived of as a logic of the humanities and human sciences, which would complement the notion of a logic and theory of the natural sciences" (p. 46).

Action research, as an orientation, is also concerned that method and technique do not dominate or distort the path to understanding. As a research orientation, action research works to address the huge gulf that exists between theoretical methods, the findings, and the incorporation of those findings into practice. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated that the purpose of action research is:

> To inform and guide the practice of educators by indicating the actions that they need to take if they are to overcome their problems and eliminate their difficulties. In a sense, educational theory must always be oriented towards transforming the ways in which teachers' [principals] 'see themselves and their situation so that the factors frustrating their educational goals and purposes can be recognized and eliminated. Equally it must be oriented towards transforming the situation which place obstacles in the way of achieving educational goals, perpetuate ideological distortions, and impede rational and critical work in educational situations. (p. 130)

Carr and Kemmis recommended that action researchers use the self-reflective planning, acting, observing and reflecting spiral of cycles to help researchers transform the way they see themselves and their situation.

### The possibility of turning theory into practice

Exploring the possibility of turning theory into practice is another important goal of this action research project. Both hermeneutics and action research focus on theory and practice, but focus differently. "Hermeneutics is a philosophical *theory* and *practice*.... Action research is a form of *theory* and *practice* engaged with real life; practical questions and issues" [italics in original] (Smits, as cited in Sumara & Carson, 1997, p. 282). Action research focuses on life situations proposing practical questions about life issues. This does not mean, however, that hermeneutics and action research are incompatible discourses that cannot be combined as a research orientation and a theoretical discourse in an inquiry into leadership. Even though they operate at different levels of the human experience, they are both suited to this inquiry into the meaning of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu. Atkins (1988) pointed out that hermeneutics "as an interpretive framework… can provide" educational leaders "with a powerful tool for reshaping" leadership in "education thought and practice" (p. 437).

An essential point that needs to be addressed is, how or why does philosophical hermeneutics, which focuses on how we understand in general and especially in relation to texts and other cultural works, assist with the understanding of principal leadership that deals with the particular demands in their lifeworld? In his discussion of alienation of theory from practice, Gadamer recognizes this problem in what he terms the modern human or social sciences.

A great deal of knowledge has been reputedly gained through scientifically legitimated research about leadership and effective leadership practice. This knowledge has been woven into educational administration courses and leadership academy programs, and delivered to thousands of prospective and practicing educational leaders over the years. This knowledge has been derived from the analysis of public and corporate sector leadership and management practices in their propositional, conceptual, and abstracted forms. What this discourse lacks is understanding from within the space of leaders who must operate in non-traditional SBM/SBDM settings, since that knowledge of leadership discourse was gained by observing principals in traditional settings, not engaging them in reflection on leadership in traditional settings. Gadamer (1975/1989) wrote that "a person who 'understands' a text… has not only projected himself understandingly toward a meaning – in the effort of understanding – but the accomplished understanding constitutes a state of new intellectual freedom" (p. 260). Gadamer (1975/1989) said that, "understanding always is: assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one's own" (p. 398). But can assimilating what is written about the lifeworld of a principal in a traditional setting, be transposed as representative of the lifeworld of a principal in a non-traditional setting?

Aporia

To deal with the possibilities for interpretation and understanding Gallagher's use of *aporia* is helpful. In philosophical terms an *aporia* is doubtful matter, or better yet, a perplexing difficulty. The word *aporia* is a Greek term, which means a state of being at a loss or something that is impassable. By making use of an *aporia* the action research participants are acknowledging the difficulties that exist in trying to interpret and understand effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu. For example, what does effective mean? For that matter, what is leadership and how do we know it when we see it? If we observe it, how do we know the difference between effective and ineffective leadership?

In his book *Hermeneutics and Education* (1992), Gallagher used *aporia* when he dealt with the relationships between hermeneutics and educational practice. He focused on the *aporia* of reproduction, authority/emancipation and conversation. Gallagher stated that for him these *aporias* were vital to understanding hermeneutics. In the chapter *Living Within the Space of Practice: Action Research Inspired by Hermeneutics*, Smits proposed the *aporias* of theory/practice and ethics. Smits' combinations of aporias are relevant to the proposed action research project. They are also relevant to the question of the relationship between hermeneutics and action research. In dealing with these *aporias*, this research will suggest ways of thinking about action research as a practice that focuses on dealing with the difficulties of understanding.

Gallagher pointed out that the *aporia* of reproduction addresses the difficulty that exists between methodology, and the issues of validity and truth. Some would have us believe that truth is arrived at through the diligent application of the appropriate method. In some cases, leaders in school jurisdictions may seek common understandings so that they can be integrated into the practices of principals and teachers for the benefit of students. In *Truth and Method* (1975/1989) Gadamer pointed out, however, that no matter how diligently the method is applied there can be no guarantee that truth will emerge, nor that one will depart with complete knowledge of that into which one inquired.

For Gadamer, philosophic hermeneutics' central focus is not methods of interpretation and understanding. Its central focus is enunciated through the question: What enables understanding to occur? This question goes well beyond method. It also goes well beyond the individual will of the interpreter. Gadamer was far more concerned with what happens to people over and above their wanting and doing and far less concerned with the process of coming to an understanding.

Gadamer maintained that it is vital that we remain 'open' to the experience. For him, hermeneutics was not about the recovery of existing or formerly inscribed meanings. He was far more concerned that interpretation involves creativity, or the creation of meaning. Gadamer stressed that it is almost impossible to produce an exact replication of a text, an event or a situation. The reproduction that takes place creates a new meaning of the text, an event or a situation. In Gadamer's words, "all understanding is always more than the mere recreation of someone else's meaning" (1975/1989, p. 338). Gadamer felt that understanding is immersed in human creativity because it is a process that incorporates both previous and new meanings. Thompson (1981/1995) pointed out that human creativity is based on the "intrinsic polysemy of words" in that words in various languages have more than one meaning (p. 11).

Action researchers, as interpreters, must therefore also be sensitive to context in order to interpret and understand correctly the meaning of words. But sensitivity to context requires the use of discernment that is successfully applied to the back and forth exchange of messages - questions and answers- between interlocutors. "This activity of discernment is properly called interpretation; it consists in recognizing which relatively univocal message the speaker has constructed on the polysemic basis of the common lexicon" (Thompson, 1981/1995, p. 44).

The more technical-rational stress on method concerns Gadamer as, in his opinion, it results in theory dominating practice. As such, practice is seen as a kind of applied theory. In terms of action research, the *aporia* of reproduction is central to the question about the purpose of action research as the purpose of this action research project is to expand conscious horizons. Ricoeur stated that the "act of appropriation does not seek to rejoin the original intentions of the author, but rather to expand the conscious horizons of the reader by actualising the meaning of the text" (as cited in Thompson, 1981/1995, p. 18).

Action research has a normative quality that is parallel to the hermeneutic idea of application. The hermeneutic term application deals with the responsibility to bridge understanding of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Action research is practical and as such normative in that its purpose is to apply the understanding that occurs through dialogue with others. To apply the understanding that occurs through dialogue with others was an important goal of this action research project. In this particular action research inquiry, the proposed dialogue focused on the beliefs (prejudices) principals brought to the conversation about how leaders should conduct themselves and their practices, and how these understandings should be applied. The stimulus for any inquiry emerges out of the prejudices that the inquirer brings to the research. Therefore, Gadamer said that the prejudices that researchers bring to an inquiry are “the horizon of a particular present” (as cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p.272). Ricoeur felt that our present horizons are oriented to certain preferences. The concept of ‘horizon’, or horizon of a particular present, is based on the idea that a horizon has a range of vision. Everything that is contained in that range of vision is based on the particular vantage point of the individual doing the viewing. There is a limit to what that person can see. In hermeneutic terms, an individual “who has no horizon is one who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest” (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 269). With this in mind, a person who has a horizon is not necessarily limited to that which is nearest, but may be open to that which is as yet unseen. As action research participants we must be cognizant of our preferences because they are prejudices we bring with us as horizons of a particular present, which represent “that beyond which it is impossible to see” (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 272).

The action research participants must work to see beyond our prejudices regarding leadership.

An important goal of this action research project was to bring to language the understandings the members of the project had of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu. From a hermeneutic perspective Gadamer said that the members are bringing their 'prejudices' or pre-judgements. Gadamer believed that "interpretations are always constrained by the prejudices of the interpreter" (Gallager, 1992, p. 12). That did not mean however that the research participants clearly understood that they brought their prejudices, or pre-judgements, to this project. That only became clear in the conversations that took place with other research participants. As principals brought forward their points-of-view, other 'horizons' about leadership emerged. What is important is not what is true or valid in a transparent reproduction of previous knowledge, but the projection of leadership possibilities that are already inherent in who and what we are and do as leaders in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

Transformation through emancipation

Ingrained within the literature on hermeneutics is a complex debate over the question of the emancipatory potential of hermeneutics. This debate raises the *aporia* of authority and emancipation in hermeneutics. Some believe that emancipation can be achieved through criticism. Critical theorists like Foucault (1988) said "to practice criticism demands not only a liberation of thought, but also an intellectual activity that makes conflicts visible through the action of theory. If transformation is to be achieved, it can only be realized in a permanent state of criticism" (p. 152). Intellectual transformation, as it applies to the role of leaders in SBM/SBDM milieu, may only be achieved if the action researchers "see how far the liberation of thought can make those transformations urgent enough for people to want to carry them out and difficult enough to carry out for them to be profoundly rooted in reality" (Foucault, 1988, p. 155). Gallagher (1992) pointed out that Foucault agreed with Gadamer "that reflective acknowledgement of power relations does not amount to liberation from them" (p. 285). The principal's lifeworld of authority will not transform just because there is an acknowledgement of power relations. But, the opportunity for emancipation exists "in and through conversation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 289) and critical reflection on those power relationships.

That opportunity for emancipation through conversation may not address the exasperation of critical theorists over the perceived inability of action research to address issues such as, the practitioner's control over their work. Such frustrations may always exist, yet that does not negate the value of action research as an orientation. Action research allows principals to deal with the lifeworld in which they are immersed. The possibilities for emancipation, however, will still exist, but it will be constrained by the realities of the job and the relationships that exist within that job. However, action research makes it possible for participants to immerse themselves in reflection, and transformation of practice may result due to the conversation with colleagues about leadership practice. Reflection on practice is an important part of this action research project because in order for principals to have an opportunity to transform the leadership environment that is reflected in the research on effective schools and effective principals,

principals must reflect upon it to understand the "webs of interlocution" (Smits, as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 288).

Critical theorists such as Foucault and Derrida suggested that the utilization of critical pedagogical practice would help to address the issue of hegemonic distortion. Aoki (1980) said, "critical theory is reflection. In reflection, the actor through the critical analytic process uncovers and makes explicit the tacit and hidden assumptions and intentions held" (p. 16). In this research, action researchers will recognize and understand critical inquiry and may choose to immerse themselves in critical reflection about their lifeworld. Through such a process new questions may emerge, which in turn, may stimulate other questions to emerge in an ongoing process "which is dialectical and transformative" (Aoki, 1980, p. 17). A critical pedagogy facilitates the promotion of "critical consciousness, and struggles to break down the institutional structures and arrangements which reproduce oppressive ideologies and the social inequalities that are sustained and produced" by "social structures and ideologies" (van Manen, 1997, p. 176). That potential for reflective experience is for Arnowitz and Giroux equated with critical thinking. In Dewey's words critical thinking is a vital part of "the fundamental precondition for an autonomous and self-motivated public or citizenry," and as such critical thinking is a model of critical reflection suited to critical pedagogy (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 256).

Critical reflection is also an important part of what Gadamer and others called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" in that often things are not as they seem or as they are being presented. An example of this was presented by Freire's critique of literacy as it is being practiced. Freire believed that instead of reducing the concept of literacy to a set of reading and writing skills, students should be reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing. The present approach views students as empty vessels to be filled by teachers. In this way education is an act of depositing - a banking concept of education. Friere (1970/1997) felt that the banking concept of education regards students as "manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop" critical consciousness (p. 54). "The banking approach to adult education…will never propose to students that they critically consider reality as it does not serve the interests of the oppressors" (Freire, 1970/1997, p. 55). Freire's alternative is a critical pedagogy that focuses on liberation. "Authentic liberation - the process of humanization - is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 258). Such a view sees humanity transforming their lives and their world through the humanizing action of emancipation. Action researchers may utilize critical reflection to ascertain whether they believe we might be viewed as "empty vessels to be filled" with the dominant discourses on leadership. What are the dominant discourses on leadership?. Are there any hegemonic distortions? If so, what are they and why do they exist? As leaders, do we need to critically reflect on leadership practices promoted in literature or at leadership academies?

When critical reflection is brought to bear on the traditional literature on leadership it becomes obvious that leadership is immersed in the Western tradition of individual consciousness. Hermeneutics challenges that tradition and creates knowledge from the sociality of language. Hermeneutics, and hermeneutically inspired action research is most conducive to this action research project because it places itself in the "paradigm of language" rather than the "paradigm of consciousness" (Smits, as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 288). "Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 384). "It is from language as a medium that our whole experience of the world, and especially hermeneutical experience, unfolds" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 457). As such language has a pivotal role to play in the understanding of the lifeworld of principals. This paradigm shift is important in that it moves the focus from the individual creation of meaning, to the collective creation of meaning by the action research participants. This collective creation of meaning is important because the referent group is principals within a Western Canadian urban school division. Determining the effective leadership practices of principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu will facilitate the eventual involvement of more principals in a conversation about SBM/SBDM leadership. It will also allow the organization to enter into future conversations with principals about relevant professional development activities, recruitment and selection activities, evaluation, and how to effectively implement SBM/SBDM into a Western Canadian urban school division. Cross and Rice stated:

> Leaders often resist collaborative, collegial relationships. Yet school leaders should engage in open sharing of successful leadership practice and jointly seek resolutions to the nettlesome issues that inhibit effective teaching and learning within their schools and systems. Schools and school districts should modify administrative practice and governing policy to provide sufficient time and circumstance for principals to develop and maintain such relationships. (December 2000, p. 65)

This collective creation of meaning may be challenged because it does not meet a particular interpretation of objectivity. Objectivity is highly prized and some hold subjectivity in low regard. Hermeneutics will help to address the conflict between the subjective-objective split. This action research project is not research that is outside looking in, it is research that is immersed in the internal. The action researchers exist in totality within their own subjective context. This research proposal addresses the practice of knowing, knowing that is constructed by principals. That knowledge of leadership will be subjective and as such is an important part of this research proposal and cannot be negated because it does not meet a particular interpretation and valuing of objectivity.

That subjectiveness is also relevant because principals often practice their leadership skills in isolation. Rarely do principals engage in conversations "about the stuff of culture, the essence of values and beliefs, the expression of needs, purposes, and desires of people, and about the sources of deep satisfaction in the form of meaning and significance," if we were to do this, "we are talking about the lifeworld of schools and of parents, teachers, and students" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 5), which is the lifeworld of principals. Sergiovanni went on to say that one element of school effectiveness is "broadly defined as achieving higher levels of pedagogical thoughtfulness, developing relationships characterized by caring and civility, and recording increases in the quality of student performance" (2000, p. 24). If this is so, then we need to be reflecting on the behaviors of leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu that will help to achieve this element of school effectiveness. This is especially true when many of the indicators from governments are ends that determine the means, which Sergiovanni said limits the flexibility of SBM/SBDM leaders.

> Because ends, in the form of standardized standards and assessments, ultimately determine means, the further we move in the direction of specifying standards across the curriculum and then testing to see if these standards have been met, the more likely we will be to determine the details of the curriculum to be taught and the kinds of teaching needed for it to be learned. This, then, provides a central agency with virtually complete control of the educational process. (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 77)

Max van Manen (1997) pointed out that such lived experiences gather "hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them" (p. 37). Principals have a direct relationship with Ministries of Education, which is a relationship to authority or to the power of tradition. Tradition shapes us, and our understanding of our lifeworld. As much as traditions bind us, it is just as conceivable that a conversation about such relationships and traditions may open new horizons and increase the possibility for emancipation. Action research literature is replete with examples where reflection helped with emancipation of the participants. Participants immerse themselves in reflection and articulate, or write, or experience opportunities for emancipation. Ricoeur stated that such opportunities are "important moments of distanciation" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 288). Such moments are opportunities to reflect upon previously held, current, and future understandings of democratic educational leadership. As Blase et al. (1999) pointed out: "the terms *democracy* and *empowerment* have entered education administration discourse with little attention to the extensive theorizing about the issues of power and democracy" (p. 147). Principals need time to reflect on the traditional technical-rational approach to modern leadership and management as it relates to the issues of democracy and empowerment, which are immersed in the concepts of SBM/SBDM.

The principle of distanciation - distance - deals with people's ability to confront things that are unfamiliar. Things that are unfamiliar, like SBM/SBDM, do not immediately fit into our understanding or as Gadamer said, the "fore-conception" of our understanding (1975/1989, p. 294). Structural changes to school administration like SBM/SBDM are unfamiliar to most administrators and the principle of distanciation accounts for people's ability to turn the unfamiliar into the familiar through the concept of appropriation. Appropriation is "understanding at and through distance" (Thompson, 1981/1995, p. 143). Thompson (1981/1995) went on to point out that appropriation is his interpretation of the German word *Aneignung* that means, "to make one's own what was initially alien" (p. 185). Gadamer and Ricoeur dealt with distanciation as a "principle of textual hermeneutics" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 125).

Earlier it was pointed out that language plays an integral part in our attempts to interpret the world. That means then that conversation is an important part of the process of interpretation. In hermeneutic terms, the *aporia* of conversation has to do with whether truth can be attained through conversation and transformation. This is an important *aporia* in that the action research participants will most likely be struggling with a questions like: What makes it possible to agree on what is a truism, or which interpretation is a more acceptable truism?

From a hermeneutic perspective research is more than just coming to an understanding about the topic of the inquiry. The value of philosophical hermeneutics is to keep reminding us that understanding is implicit in and made possible through communication. Hermeneutics is acceptant of the fact that understanding is both enabled and limited by the traditions, structures and language within which peoples' lives are embedded. Gadamer emphasized that the intent of his investigation in *Truth and Method* was to show the relevance of hermeneutics to modern life. He was not intent on developing a methodology, but wanted "to understand what the human sciences truly are … and what connects them with the totality of our experience of the world." (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. xiii). Gadamer pointed out that the "totality of our experience of the world" is integrally involved in knowing ourselves, "for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 289).

The idea of conversation as being central to the process of understanding is important to hermeneutics. Conversation is a process of exchange between one person and another individual or group of individuals. The purpose of such conversation is normally oriented to something that requires understanding. What this means, is that common understandings will not just emerge as part of the conversation that occurs within the action research participants. Common understandings will emerge from the process of the research participants attending to the issues of leadership, which require understanding. Ricoeur pointed out that in his opinion conversation, in which the research participants immerse themselves, follows the model of reading a text. Like reading, Ricoeur suggested, "conversation entails both relinquishing - a reader giving oneself over to a text - and appropriation - enlarging one's self-understanding through reading" (as cited by Smits in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 289).

This action research project, informed by hermeneutics, was a social process, which required collaboration and a feeling of community. Achieving a feeling of community was challenged by the imposition of expert and technological modes of thought. The conversation that occurred had its limitations and was faced with many challenges. The very notion of action research as conversation implies the need to build a community around understanding, but also to recognize the difficulties inherent in doing this. Despite those difficulties, the idea of conversation is important as a way of reflecting on the possibilities for building understanding about effective leadership practice in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

### Conducting practice more thoughtfully

Exploring the possibility of merging theory into practice was an important goal of this action research project. In considering the hermeneutic *aporia* of theory and practice the concern was with the relationship between the two terms. Is theory related to and relevant to practice, or is practice related to or relevant to theory? At issue here is their connectivity. For many years, practice has been considered the "application of science to technical tasks" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 312). This was shown by Gadamer to be "a very inadequate notion" (1975/1989, p. 312). From the perspective of hermeneutics, Smits pointed out that "the notion of practice has become devalued in modernity as the application of theory and hence as a kind of technique" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 290).

Gadamer suggested that practice "has to do with others and codetermines its communal concerns by doing" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 290). Gadamer's suggestion implied a sense of practice that is significantly different from theorizing in the abstract sense, and the application of a technique. He believed that practice in human endeavours like leadership is much more than technique. This is so because Gadamer believed that human endeavour is more about "the responsibility for others and how to manifest that concern through good actions…. Practice," in the opinion of Gadamer, "must be imbued with understanding and practice must show understanding" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, 1997, p. 290).

Action research opens up the possibility of conducting practice more thoughtfully, that is practice that is thoughtfully imbued with theory. From a hermeneutic perspective action research can be both theory and practice when theorizing is oriented to questions of purpose and common concerns and when practice involves the mediation of tradition and the reflexive responsibilities to bring this mediation to language and communication.

Understanding always involves appropriation from a hermeneutic perspective. That is, application is a moment in the process of understanding when it can be shown through practice that understanding has occurred. "Appropriation (*Aneignung*) of the text," is the application "(*Anwendung*) to the present situation of the reader" (Thompson, 1981/1995, p. 143). Understanding and therefore application implies ethical choice and action. This means then that there is a responsibility inherent in bringing understanding into words and in the creation of meaning. Within the educational milieu there exists ethical and normative standards and traditions. Such ethical and normative standards and traditions, however, are sometimes reinterpreted anew by principals in situations, which call for decisions. This is a hermeneutic process in which the possibilities for moral agency and subjectivity emerge.

The understandings that form the foundation upon which principals rely when making practical decisions are not always firm. Many foundations have been grounded upon science and rationality and the "rigid dichotomies modernity has created between objective reality and subjective experience, fact and imagination, secular and sacred, public and private" (Waters, as cited in Doll, 1989, p. 244). Post-modernity brings into question many of modernity's metanarratives that exist about leadership and the manner in which principals interact with students, staff and parents. "Post-modernity is the breaking apart of reason" and it reveals, "that reason has only been one narrative among others" (Foucault, 1988, p. 34). Foucault (1972) stated:

> Exploration of social life…reinforces the notion that there can be no objective truth because there is an essential relationship between the ways in which knowledge is produced and the way power is exercised…. We are subject to oppression…not only because of the operation of large-scale systems of control and authority, but also because of the normally accepted procedures, routines, and practices through which we enact our daily public and personal lives. (as cited in Stringer 1996, p. 151)

These are precisely the moments when principals have to make decisions. In many instances, principals can no longer rely on the metanarratives of modernity, or look to their entrenched codes or theories as guides or to inform practice, and to give legitimacy to decisions.

Such circumstance sees the diminishing of the "grand" narratives or, metanarrative and the proliferation of a multiplicity of stories that offer opportunities. Indeed, this is a time in which hermeneutics comes into play and takes on ethical import.

The hermeneutic circle recognizes that there are many narratives. The hermeneutic circle recognizes that those narratives must relate, in a dialogical way with the lifeworld of people in real situations. The principle of the hermeneutic circle is that "the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 291). The essential circularity of understanding is explained by Schleiermacher when he stated that "the meaning of the part is only understood within the context of the whole; but the whole is never given unless through an understanding of the parts. Understanding therefore requires a circular movement from parts to whole and from whole to parts" (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 59). The hermeneutic circle is also seen as an expanding circle that grows continuously larger as it moves. As it grows larger it encompasses more contexts that help with interpretation and understanding. In *Being and Time* Heidegger maintained, "we understand something only in relation to the whole of which it ispart, and vice versa" (as cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 35). Both Schleiermacher and Dilthey described the hermeneutic circle in terms of "the text and its objective historical context. The only subjective element admitted into this circle is the individuality of the author's subjective intentions or subjective uses of language" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 60). Finally, Thompson (1981/1995) stated that, "ultimately, the correlation between explanation and understanding, between understanding and explanation, is the hermeneutical circle" (p. 221).

The relevance of hermeneutics and the hermeneutic circle to the postmodern moment is in the hermeneutic notion of experience. Experience implies an openness to difference and hence to the possibility of the emergence of new meaning. The proliferation of a multiplicity of stories offers opportunities for new meanings to emerge. The hermeneutic circle recognizes that there are many universal narratives generated by creative understanding. As such, hermeneutics recognizes that this creativity of understanding possesses the potential for both hopeful and ethical possibilities to emerge.

Action research is an ethical practice that is open to the temporality and particularity of the lifeworld of principals. Making informed decisions, decisions that are based on good pedagogy, is more of a concern with ethics and others, than it is a concern about knowledge. Action research that makes leadership practice more 'thought-full' is putting theory into practice.

The action researchers will have their own pre-understandings of the leadership required of principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu. Presenting principals with predetermined understandings of leadership practices may restrict the possibilities of dialogue, collaboration, and the potential for reframing the question. If this occurs it will negate the possibility for a deeper understanding of effective leadership and how it occurs in a SBM/SBDM milieu. In order to achieve a better understanding of the new educational and environmental context, it is imperative that the circumstances be such that the best opportunity possible is available so that the members of the action research project immerse themselves in a 'dialogical journey'. During the course of that journey common understandings will emerge that will serve, as a foundation upon which will grow a better self-understanding. Stringer (1996) said that the "major purpose of the process is to achieve a higher-level synthesis, to reach a consensus where possible, to otherwise expose and clarify the different perspectives, and to use these consensual/divergent views to build an agenda for negotiating actions to be taken" (p. 41).

Action research as hermeneutic inquiry offers an opportunity for that deeper understanding. Action research is less about the methodologies employed in the research process and more about how profoundly project members come to understand what is being researched. Any research methodology can achieve a standard of rigor but it may not achieve the standard of rigor that truly reflects an understanding of that which is being investigated. Action research strives to achieve a high standard of understanding, a level that truly reflects an understanding of the human circumstance.

### Phronesis – moral knowledge

Action research also strives to construct positive and productive relationships. These relationships are built on a foundation of productive interactions and effective communication. Stringer (1996) said that the intent of this is "to provide a climate that enables disparate groups of people to work harmoniously and productively to achieve their various goals" (p. 19). Working harmoniously means those involved in the action research project need to be aware that understanding (knowledge) is often open to reinterpretation and that understanding involves phronesis. Unlike the technical sophistication of scientific research, which focuses on the universal application of knowledge, phronesis involves ethical know-how and the understanding that knowledge is always applied according to the demands of the situation in which the principal is immersed. Phronesis is extremely relevant for this action research project because it is grounded in the concern for others. That particular concern for others mediates between what can be considered universal knowledge and particular knowledge. Both universal and particular knowledge is constitutive of the individual. As much as our society values knowledge that is objective, that knowledge is constitutive of the individual. An individual's particular knowledge is not necessarily objective knowledge that is clearly detached from the knower. Knowledge and knower are clearly inextricably linked, therefore others, in this case teachers, will no doubt be concerned about the principal's objective knowledge and expertise because it will have a definite impact upon their lives, and the lives of their students.

"The ancient Greeks classified knowledge into three types: theoretical knowledge (*episteme*), moral knowledge (*phronesis*), and technical knowledge (*techne*). Modern epistemology, however, so emphasizes the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge that ultimately moral and technical knowledge are reduced to one: practical knowledge" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 151). Gadamer clarified the difference between moral and technical knowledge. The most important difference is "that *phronesis* (moral knowledge) involves a self-knowledge that is not required in technical know-how. Moreover, whereas technical knowledge is knowledge about means and in a sense is itself means, *phronesis* in a curious way…embraces both means and end" (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 153). Gadamer and Aristotle agreed that technical knowledge requires cleverness when it is being applied, but moral knowledge mandates that there be understanding in its application.

Faced with the uncertainty and the unfamiliarity with leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu, principals with phronesis will not have to rely on entrenched codes or theories that, in most cases, are applied with mechanical precision. Rather, action will be guided by a finite understanding of the actual circumstance. This will mean that instead of classifying a particular situation under an existing set of rules, regulations or laws, phronesis requires that the principal take into consideration the existing situation. "In *phronesis* one approaches an understanding of the universal in light of the particular, rather than the other way around" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 153). Gallagher (1992) also pointed out that, "the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* holds importance for hermeneutics in the following way. If all understanding involves application, the model for this application is not technical knowledge, but *phronesis*" (p. 153).

Therefore action research as phronesis, as interpretative knowing, as praxis (understanding as application), and as a concern for others—other contexts and other ways of seeing and being in the world—will assist project members to reconsider and understand anew the meaning of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu. The work of Carr and Kemmis was important here because they made the distinction among technical, practical and emancipatory action research. Technical action research focuses on and investigates issues raised by outsiders. In practical action research, outsiders work with practitioners without ensuring that the practitioners become a self-reflecting community. Emancipatory action research ensures that practitioners and outsiders take joint responsibility for the development of practice and opportunities for the growth of the practitioners through self-reflection. In emancipatory action research the participants "take responsibility for the Socractic role of assisting the research participants in its collaborative self-reflection" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 203). That self-reflection is interpretative knowing – the reconsideration and understanding anew of the meaning of principal leadership. Self-reflection is also an empowering process for the researchers as "it engages them in the struggle for more rational, just, democratic and fulfilling forms of education" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 205).

The emancipatory path to action research was an important benefit of this action research project. The facilitator and the co-researchers had the opportunity to work collaboratively and, through reflection, developed understandings for themselves about the leadership issues connected with the action research project. Action research favours consensual and participatory procedures that actively involve project members in a systematic investigation of the issues and problems they face. It allows project members to formulate significant and sophisticated explanations of their specific circumstance. It also provides project members with the opportunity, through reflection, to plan in order to address the issues and challenges they face. "The emancipatory approach emphasizes the critique of organizational and societal structures to enhance human possibility and democratic values, such as social justice and equality" (Blase, et al., 1995, p. 133). Kanu (1997) stated that "self-analysis and self questioning … proceed to question the behaviors, opinions, and ideas of others and learn to judge ideas by reference to supporting evidence rather than by the authority of their sources" (as cited in Carson & Sumara, p. 177).

Through reflection, a deeper understanding of effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu emerged. Reflection on leadership challenges the dominant paradigms of leadership theory and provided co-researchers with a vehicle to address particular leadership issues and challenges. Carr and Kemmis (1986) pointed out that those who engage in this criticism

> accept much of the thinking that informs the 'practical' view. Both, for example, accept that individual practitioners must be committed to self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values. Where they differ is in the additional claim of the 'critical' view that the formulation of these additional aims may be distorted by ideological forces and constraints and their realization may be impeded by institutional structures. In the critical view, educational problems and issues may arise not only as *individual* matters, but as *social* matters requiring collective or common action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved. The outcome of critical research, therefore, is not just the formulation of informed practical judgement, but theoretical accounts which provide a basis for analyzing systematically distorted decisions and practices, and suggesting the kinds of social and educational action by which these distortions may be removed. Furthermore, while these theories may be made available by the researcher, they are not offered as 'externally given' and 'scientifically verified' propositions. Rather, they are offered as interpretations which can only be validated in and by the *self-understandings* of practitioners under conditions of *free and open dialogue* [italics in original]. (pp. 31-32)

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) suggested that action research does offer participants a greater opportunity for reflection, "action research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into one whole: ideas-in-action" (p. 6).

Kemmis and McTaggart believed that action research is premised on the idea that knowledge—including theoretical knowledge—grows reflectively from experience. This definition also clearly indicates why the emancipatory path is so significant in that it offers an opportunity to improve not only understanding and practice, but also the 'rationality and justice' of educational practices.

Indeed, as McTaggart and Garbutchean-Singh (1988) pointed out, reflection on values is one of the main distinguishing characteristics of action research from more narrow or limited reflection on technical practice. Indeed, the opportunity for principals involved in an action research project to seek understanding of individual practice collaboratively, is an important component of this study. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) stated:

> Improving education is not just a matter of *individual action*, it is also a matter of *cultural action*. It means changing both at the individual level and at the level of the culture of the research participants of which the individual is a member [italics in original]. (p. 34)

Many of those who write about action research concur with the theoretical perspective put forward by Kemmis, et al. Action research is a modus operandi that focuses on valuing peoples' knowledge that works to improve their interpretative skills, that constructs critical perspectives and consciousness, so that where necessary existing hegemonic paradigms can be challenged.

Action research offers the members of the action research participants the opportunity to look, think, and act. Lewin (1946) recognized the importance of action as a source of understanding. He recognized that action research participants engaged in a cycle of planning and action. His notion of action research focused on the importance of understanding situated in action. Stringer (1996) expanded on the work of Lewin by outlining action research steps. Those steps are to 'look' in order to define and describe the problem; to 'think' to analyze and interpret the situation; and to 'act' in order to formulate solutions to the identified problems.

Lewin's recognition of the importance of action as a source of understanding is fundamental to the question of critical reflection on SBM/SBDM leadership. It is important to encourage principals to reflect upon the meaning of leadership and to question the meaning and importance of reflection as it relates to their daily lives.

Another research query is, understanding the meaning and practice of action research as it pertains to understanding the dynamics of research. Focusing researchers' attention in this manner helped to derive relevant questions about educational leadership, leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu, and the character of leadership research. The problem is not solely focused on how one can implement reflective leadership within an organization, as much as it is what a researcher can learn from becoming immersed in the investigation of practical leadership issues with principals involved in this action research project.

An appropriate research methodology therefore, should assist in the creation of knowledge and an enhanced understanding by the participants of the problem being investigated in the action research project. Participants in an action research project must focus on how learning and understanding can emerge from the analysis of situated observations, interviews and discussions with participants, and transcripts of the dialogical journey they are undertaking. The manner in which action research inquiry is organized lends itself to questions emerging as part of the action research process, which was essential to the understanding of educational leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

Hermeneutics therefore, is the theoretical discourse most suited to this action research project because the focus of the action research project is the interpretation and understanding of what constitutes effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu. For its part, action research is the most suitable research orientation in that it too focuses on understanding. Hermeneutics, being immersed in the literary and philosophic worlds and with its central aim of interpreting literature and philosophy and answering the question of what it means to be human, is the most appropriate theoretical discourse.

Action research is preoccupied by the world of human relationships with a focus on responsibility, the relationship between knowledge and action, and appropriate practices. Combining the two provides the best opportunity for achieving the goal of understanding effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

## Methodological Considerations

### Context

This research project took place in a large urban centre in a Western Canadian province. The province had not mandated SBM/SBDM, but was moving to reduce the number of school jurisdictions, to increase the involvement of various stakeholders, particularly parents, in the decision making process, and was moving toward a new direction for school-level governance.

The Board of the large urban centre had recently completed a review that determined that there was a perception that "too many resources were going to central administration" (Scharf, Kulba, Jacknicke, Leonard & Sackney, 2000, p. 12). The review noted, "schools would be better served if more decisions were made at the school level as opposed to at central office" (Scharf, et al., 2000, p. 13). The input received from parent councils stated that their "involvement was largely in terms of being advised of decisions already made" (2000, p. 16). There was also a clear indication from teachers of a "call for decentralization," but many in-school administrators indicated that "there needed to be more decentralization of authority and resource allocation to the school level but they did not want to go as far as to a site-based management system" (2000, pp. 17-18). The review concluded with a recommendation that:

> A review of centralized and decentralized authority and functions be undertaken. Such a review would have to recognize the changing nature of the schools' mandates and clientele. It would also have to reflect the policies on school configurations and programs. The design should facilitate the implementation of what are considered best practices at the school level, and should hold schools accountable for achieving these practices. (2000, p. 52)

The Board of the large urban centre also undertook an administrative review to examine the administrative operations of the school division. A part of the review was to examine the administrative structure within the context of the collaborative culture that exists within the division. One objective of the review was to analyze and clarify the role and relationship of the central office administration and school-based administration.

It was determined by the Board that my proposed research was timely and consistent with the administrative review, which was undertaken by an outside consultant.

## Population

Four principals, who were interested in the issue of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu, were selected to become research partners in the action research project. At a principals' meeting I provided a general explanation of the action research project and indicated that a general invitation to participate in the project would be issued via e-mail. I emphasized that no one was under any obligation to participate in the action research project. A general invitation to participate in this action research project was consistent with current practice regarding participation in university research projects in the jurisdiction and lessened any feeling of obligation to participate.

As this urban jurisdiction has approximately 50 principals, the selection of participants was based on the following criteria:

- principals who have indicated an interest in being involved in the action research project;
- principals who have five or more years of experience as principals; and
- representation from elementary/junior, and senior high school principals.

A fundamental premise of community-based action research is that those involved in the research must have an interest in the focus of the research. It is also important that the co-researchers have experience so that they have an understanding of the principal's lifeworld.

Representation from elementary/junior and senior high school principals meant that the issues and challenges these particular individuals faced would be incorporated into the action research project. There may be many issues and challenges that were similar for elementary/junior and senior high school principals, but I anticipated that there were differences. To exclude either stratum might have excluded some of the leadership practices required of principals based on the unique challenges and problems faced by elementary/junior and senior high school principals.

The principals that indicated an interest in participating in this action research project were provided with a summary of the proposal (see Appendix E). They were asked to read the summary to determine whether they were still interested in participating. All principals who continued to express interest in participating were met with individually in order to determine their understanding of and interest to:

- explore the central research question, "What should the effective leadership practices be for principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu?";

- explore the ambiguity that exists in the research on effective schools and effective principals that has not taken into consideration the structural context of SBM/SBDM;
- commit the time necessary to the action research project; and
- collaborate with me as a co-researcher, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, taking into consideration my position within the organization.

Co-researcher's consent was obtained through letters signed by the participants and the researcher (see Appendix F).

Procedures

The action research project meetings commenced in March and the research partners met once every two weeks until the end of June as outlined in Appendix G: *Proposed Timeline for Completion of the Dissertation.* The researcher partners engaged in a cycle of reading (see Appendix H), conversations that allowed for in-depth exploration of their experiences and facilitated sharing of insights and interpretive dialogue. At each meeting of the group, the research partners decided on the agenda, topics to be covered, the direction they would like their readings and actions to take, additional readings, and the frequency and length of each meeting. I set the agenda for the first meeting as the research facilitator, because the research partners had not met as yet. That agenda consisted of:

- a brief summary of the action research project;
- a description of the expectations for participants in the context of action research, including reading, the opportunity to keep a private journal, sharing understandings, insights, and perspectives, and engaging in interpretive dialogue;
- a discussion of action research participants' expectations;
- an initial sharing of action research participants' understandings of the question: In your opinion, what makes a principal effective?
- a critiquing and negotiation of proposed guiding principles (see Appendix I); and

- finally, a group discussion as to how we should proceed, including frequency, location, and topics for future sessions.

That first meeting of the research participants was crucial to the success of the research project. It set the tone and in an effort to encourage open and free flowing discussion the meeting was held at a neutral location within the boundaries of the school jurisdiction. There were a number of locations like a university campus that could have been used. Being outside of the "regular" working environment enhanced the teamwork.

The research partners chose the topics for the second meeting that began with an examination of concepts outlined in the research proposal like effective schools/effective principals, leadership, critical reflection, modernity, post-modernity, SBM/SBDM, and democracy to name a few. Topics for each subsequent meeting were determined based on the evolving needs and interests of the research partners. The remainder of the meetings took place over a four-month period.

As the research partners had an opportunity to read, reflect and share their understandings of their readings, they were invited to:

- reexamine the various elements of the central research question;
- reexamine their initial response to the research question as a whole:
- uncover any emergent research questions,
- reflect on the implications for their practice of educational leadership and SBM/SBDM, and
- explore the possibility for change in leadership practice.

During the final group of meetings, the action researchers engaged in group closure sessions and individual conversations. During these sessions the research partners were asked to:

- participate in a closing reflection on the research question and implications for practice;

- reflect on their experience as a member of the hermeneutic circle; and
- consider whether critical reflection can be used in schools with staff.

The details of how the individual conversations were initiated were determined as the study unfolded. Open-ended questions were directed at:

- changes in their understanding of the central research question;
- the affect of their participation in the study on their practice, and
- possibilities for their further personal and professional development that come from their participation in the research.

## Data collection and analysis

Both written and recorded data were collected from the group sessions and individual conversations with principals. The recordings facilitated the analysis of the discourse on leadership. I reviewed the recordings to identify themes and to provide the themes to the research partners in advance of the next meeting. Each member of the group was asked to verify its accuracy and to facilitate transference from one meeting to the next. Such transference helped the members carry on from where they left off, and to go off in new directions based on a particular interest of the research partners.

The research partners were encouraged to keep a journal. I also kept a journal so that I could reflect on my dialogical journal. The research partners chose not to share materials from their journals.

The research partners focused on how learning and understanding emerged from the analysis of situated observations, interviews and discussions with participants, and transcripts of the dialogical journey they undertook. The manner in which this action research inquiry was organized lent itself to questions emerging as part of the action research process, which was essential for a deeper understanding of educational leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu to emerge.

An interpretation of lived experience of action research must take into consideration the impact of self and other on the relationships between producer, process, and product, enriching and adding to the complexity of our interpretation of experience. Keeping this in mind, there was a holistic analysis of the data, which included a detailed description of the action research, identification and analysis of emergent themes or issues, and interpretation of assertions related to the emergent themes or issues.

## Ethical Considerations

### Potential for disruption

Given the unfolding unpredictable nature of action research, a discussion of the ethics of the study occurred and it was broader than setting rules to avoid "harm." Ethical considerations reflected the potential impact, positive and/or negative, that action research may have. Recognition was given to the possibilities for empowerment, emancipation, success, and/or conflict, disruption, and disturbance. This was not an issue of manipulating the specifics of the research so participants achieved a perceived level of success. Rather, it was an issue of sensitizing the research partners to the potential for a variety of eventualities. This in itself was a form of empowerment that allowed participants to make conscious choices as to how they engaged in the study.

Engaging in action research is a direct attempt to influence living practice in an effort to bring about material improvements. From this perspective, it was important to recognize the impact of acting locally, and the possible disruption or disturbance this action may create. As noted earlier, above and beyond the potential for changes in process and product, there existed the potential for change in the participants. Therefore, there was the possibility that the research participants would experience changes that may make it difficult or uncomfortable living in, or returning to, a work environment that at best is insensitive to, and at worst intolerant of, their changing understandings.

However, the very point of the action research project was to liberate the research partners from the belief that there are finite answers. Focusing on the local opened the door for the shared unmasking of ideological distortion in an attempt to escape the metanarratives of effective schools as imposed through policy and regulation, and expose undiscovered possibilities. Blades (1997), through reference to Foucault, reinforced the importance of liberating co-researchers and unmasking ideological distortion, taking the researcher beyond mere recognition of the act to ethical obligation:

> If… freedom means being able to break from the destining of enframing, and if this enframing is made possible through the dynamic nexus of truth, knowledge, and power, then intellectuals not only may play a role in deconstructing truth in discourse intellectuals must be involved in a critical post-modern deconstructive research if change is to happen. (p. 118)

Finally, if this unmasking was to take root in the participants' living practice, all of us as members of the group had to integrate the newfound possibilities into our lives without alienating those with whom we work and share a common bond. The research partners addressed this issue in conversation.

### Reconciling roles

In order for understanding to emerge, we addressed the nature of the collaborative relationships and the ethical dimensions that exist, as these were critical components of this action research project. Action research writers clearly identify that the nature of collaborative relationships is one of the most problematic areas. The essential question was whether more democratic modes of work could exist within an organization, which is structurally hierarchical. Carr and Kemmis (1986) believed that significant attention has to be paid to the nature of the collaborative relationships if the action research facilitator hopes to achieve open, honest dialogue and "emancipatory" thinking and action within the group.

Hermeneutics provided a process or a context through which the research partners collectively clarified the hierarchical challenges that relate to my role as Superintendent of Schools and their role as principals, their issues and concerns, and formulate new ways of envisioning their particular environment, and this research environment. "This exploration reveals the taken-for-granted visions and versions of reality that make up people's day-to-day life-worlds, bringing their unquestioned assumptions, views, and beliefs out in the open and displaying them for inspection" (Stringer, 1996, p. 59). The research partners revisited the taken-for-granted hierarchical views, and challenged the assumptions so that these could be modified in order to work collaboratively in an organization that espouses that it believes in participatory democracy. We "walked the talk" of our public commitment to participatory democracy within the organization, and we made a commitment to the action research process. The research partners indicated that they felt free to "hold me to account without fear of repercussion," for any deviation from my public commitment and espoused beliefs. We also stated that we felt free to hold each other accountable based on our commitment to the action research process.

In order to minimize the risk to the research partners further, I undertook not to participate in any way in the evaluations that are conducted every five years of the principals that choose to participate in the action research project. The Superintendent of Schools does not normally participate in principal evaluations as the assistant superintendents of this urban jurisdiction perform these duties. But, such an undertaking provided an additional level of comfort for the research partners.

To address the issue of hierarchies from another perspective, a conversation about the intrinsic benefit of the research project and participants focusing on the reality of the leadership experience of principals, occurred. Such a focus and potential proximity to common understandings, increases the potential for creating more effective leadership that should in turn enhance the lives of the students and teachers whom principals serve. As the Board desired that the Division embark the implementation of SBM/SBDM, it was to our mutual benefit to reflect on the effective leadership practices of principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu. There was intrinsic and extrinsic benefit of working on this common focus for the benefit of self, colleagues and the organization. If we are to move from the traditional to the non-traditional, we have moral and professional obligation to help each other succeed.

The research partners discussed my role as the research facilitator and their role as research participants. We addressed this issue in conversation. There was an understanding that my task as the research facilitator was to provide the kind of leadership required that assisted research participants to successfully achieve our mutual goals. As Aoki pointed out:

> In critical inquiry the researcher ... becomes part of the object of inquiry. The researcher in becoming involved with his subjects, enters into their world and engages them in mutually reflective activity. He questions his subjects and himself. Reflection by himself and participants allows new questions to emerge which, in turn, leads to more reflection. In the ongoing process which is dialectical and transformative, both researcher and subjects become participants in an open dialogue. (1980, pp. 16-18)

We discussed how we could create democratic space for our colleagues, the organization and ourselves. It was also important that everyone understood that the role of the facilitator was to act as a critical friend and to assist participants to clearly define particular problems and to help create the supportive environment that helped the research participants to effectively resolve the issues and concerns we faced. My role, and the role of the research participants, was to recognize power differentials, work to neutralize them within the group, and to ensure that the research participants felt free to bring to other member's attention any undue influence being exerted by any member.

We reflected in conversation that we must be honest with each other and that what we were trying to do was help each other and our colleagues by exploring effective leadership practices of principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu. Our purpose was to ascertain what these might be and to share our findings with our colleagues so that we could engage the leadership within the Division in a conversation about leadership, leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu and the professional development that we require to provide effective leadership as we move into and eventually operate in such a milieu. The effort was mutually beneficial.

## Summary

Improved leadership is not solely related to the exercise of power. The action research process focused on the formulation of new ways of living and working within the SBM/SBDM milieu. It also provided strategies of leadership that counter the impact of the current overemphasis on the technical and the bureaucratic. In so doing, the action research process enabled the formulation of new procedures that took into account those features of an environment that were essentially human and that spoke to issues of emotion, value, and identity.

Ultimately, however, the routines of action research suggest ways of working that enable a harmonious and productive sense of social life within a principal's particular educational environment. The end product is, I hoped the self-confidence needed to provide the requisite leadership to meet the various challenges faced by SBM/SBDM leaders. "The mere act of observing and reflecting on our own practices can be an enlightening experience, enabling us to see ourselves more clearly and to formulate ways of working that are more effective and that enhance the lives of the people with whom we work" (Stringer, 1996, p. 143).

# Chapter 4

## Tensions With the Meaning of Effective Leadership Practices for Principals in an SBM/SBDM Milieu

In a hermeneutic inquiry of effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu, the central focus is arriving at a clear understanding of effectiveness through the disclosure of meaning. A fuller understanding of the meaning of effectiveness, both explicitly and implicitly, is derived through the interpretation of texts. To achieve such an understanding of meaning I relied upon the hermeneutic insights of Gadamer (1975/1989) and Ricoeur (1982) as they pertain to the interpretation of texts and the validity of understanding. Their hermeneutic insights were explained in the previous chapter and will be utilized to attempt a hermeneutic interpretation of the participants' meaning of effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

Gadamer's belief that interpretation occurs during a process of hermeneutical reflection upon the text is of significance to this study. The validity of understanding happens when there is a fusion of horizons between the pre-understandings of the interpreter and that, which is contained in the text. When the interpreter is trying to understand something like the theories associated with a particular tradition, the interpreter does so from within the situated consciousness and subject to the effects of effective-history. That situated consciousness represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision, hence the concept of horizon. The concept of horizon is a range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point, which can be quite limited. The horizon of the present is significantly influenced by the past.

To acquire a horizon means the interpreter is not limited to what is close at hand like the theories associated with a particular tradition, but is able to see beyond them. Gadamer's idea was "that communication at a distance between two differently situated consciousnesses occurs by means of the fusion of horizons, that is, the intersection of their views on the distant and the open" (Thompson, 1981/1995, p. 62). Such understanding is termed a fusion of horizons.

For his part, Ricoeur believed that the validity of interpretation and understanding is immersed in the dialectical process of distanciation and participation. Distanciation and participation occurs when the interpreter assumes a critical distance from the text, while at the same time participating in the "world of the possible" that is disclosed by the text so that its meaning is appropriated. The understanding of interpretation put forward by Gadamer and Ricoeur informed my effort to analyze and interpret the texts of the conversations of the research participants in order to achieve an understanding of the participants' meaning of effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu.

The aforementioned meaning emerged over the course of five research conversations that occurred with the research participants approximately every two weeks from March until June 2002 with the exception of the month of April. The research conversations focused on our understanding of effective leadership practices and SBM/SBDM. Such conversations facilitated researchers gaining "new vantage points on their practice" (Carson, 1986, p. 73). The conversational relation is a hermeneutic endeavor rooted in Gadamer's philosophic hermeneutics. Philosophic hermeneutics gives due consideration to interpretive acts as the ontological task of understanding the nature of the human experience.

The research participants participated in continuous and evolving conversations about effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu, which started by trying to understand the question itself. Gadamer called this "the hermeneutical priority of the question" (as cited in Carson, 1986, p. 75). Hermeneutic interpretation does not start with the problem, but with attempts to uncover "the question to which the problem statement is to answer" (Carson, 1986, p. 76). Gadamer noted that such a process is inherently conversational:

> To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in conversation are directed. It requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning…to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all it possibilities fluid. (as cited in Carson, 1986, p. 76)

The conversations were guided initially by questions posed by the researcher, then subsequently by questions brought to the meetings by the research participants, questions that emerged during the conversations, questions about current leadership practice, and questions that arose as the result of the reading of articles on effective leadership and SBM/SBDM that were reviewed by the participants. As the conversations progressed a deeper understanding of the meaning of effective leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu emerged. That deeper understanding was the result of interpretations that evolved through the conversations and the free flowing exchange of ideas, concepts and theories about effective leadership practices and school improvement. It was a continuous and dynamic process that helped the research participants create meaning as we engaged in these conversations about effective leadership and SBM/SBDM. What became apparent over the course of these conversations was the significance of the tensions[16] that exist in the current educational environment, and that impact on school based leaders and the definition of effectiveness.

During these dynamic conversations themes emerged which I made note of and these were then discussed and validated by the research participants. These themes were subsequently analyzed and interpreted by me as the researcher. During that analysis and interpretation process the significance of a phrase used by Roland Barth became apparent. Barth stated, "… in the text only the reader speaks" (as cited in Lather, 1991, p. xx). This phrase is significant because it indicates that there exists the possibility of multiple meanings and readings of effective leadership within the hermeneutic and deconstructive approach to the interpretation of text. Bordo elucidated the importance of the multiplicity of meaning further:

> We always "see" from points of view that are invested with our social, political and personal interests, inescapably "centric" in one way or another, even in the desire to do justice to heterogeneity (as cited in Lather, 1991, p. 139).

These two statements are important because they indicate that there exists the distinct possibility for a multiplicity of meanings of effective leadership. This is both perplexing and frustrating because in my professional life a multiplicity of meanings has a significant negative impact on the conversations about effective leadership, efforts at professional development when there is a scarcity of financial resources, and principal evaluation. As for this study, the central issue is that the text of the conversations of the research participants are the texts that are open to the possibility of multiple meanings and readings; mine is just one of them.

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[16] Tension is defined as "a straining, or strained condition of the mind, feelings, or nerves" taken from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition.

## The participants explore the meaning of effective leadership as research partners

The research partners have each worked in the school division for over two decades. The four have been principals in this urban school division for a cumulative total of thirty-six years. They have worked as administrators at a variety of elementary, junior and senior high schools in different inner city and suburban locations.

As administrative colleagues they have engaged in professional development activities, coordinated and led educational initiatives, and engaged in other action research projects. All have a minimum of a Masters of Education degree; some have doctorates and all are strong advocates of professional growth. One participant had significant experience in the delivery of services and programming to students with exceptional needs. This individual's experience and perspective emerged in many of the conversations, especially around the issue of accountability and assessment.

The majority of the research partners were principals of elementary and junior high schools. None of them had worked together in a principal and vice-principal relationship. Two of the research partners, however, did work as consultants in central office for a number of years.

For reasons of research ethics and to protect the anonymity of the research participants, no further explanation of the details of these relationships and other specific facts or characteristics was provided. To reveal such information might have exposed the identity of an individual research partner through the conversational texts. Unfortunately, in avoiding such details the result might be a limiting of a full understanding of the context for certain comments.

The principals have been given the gender-neutral pseudonyms of Cagney, Bailey, Ennis and Sam to preserve their anonymity and to protect their confidentiality. My contributions to the conversations are identified by the name Terry. Both the principals and I are included in all references to "the research partners," "the research participants," "the research group," and "the group."

### The tension between local empowerment and uniformity with the system implementation of SBM/SBDM

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) claimed, "No one speaks with more authority about school leadership than principals themselves. Principals are honest, compelling spokespeople about the challenges and opportunities they face in their profession" (2002, p. x). As the research participants engaged in the conversations about effective leadership and school improvement the conversations affirmed the belief about the tensions that exist regarding research on school based leadership. The research participants believed that too little attention is being paid to the voice of principals, and it is crucial that there be increased emphasis given to those voices when research is undertaken that may impact on their role. Smith and Piele highlighted this tension:

> Many books have been written on leadership theories and almost as many concern the "how to" of leadership practice. Practitioners complain that the theoretical writing **is not useful in their everyday work**, and researchers and theoreticians look askance at "practical" works whose ideas and suggestions are not empirically validated. Practitioners perceive that researchers and theoreticians are too

> isolated from the real problems of schools, [and] that theories validated in laboratory settings may disintegrate in actual classrooms. Researchers and theoreticians argue that recommendations that are validated by only the experience of one administrator or one school are much too subjective to be useful to others [emphasis added]. (1997, p. 11)

Currently there is a renewed vigor to improve schools and an emphasis on doing so by empowering those at the school site to make the decisions they feel are necessary to achieve articulated improvement goals. Such empowerment calls for new thinking about the role of the principal and school leadership. In addition, with empowerment comes an increasing level of responsibility, accountability, and pressure on the principal to demonstrate effective leadership. Ferrandino affirmed this by stating, "You cannot have a first-rate school without first-rate school leadership" (as cited in NAESP, 2002, p. v). In an effort to research effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu, it was therefore imperative that the voice of principals be clearly heard because "although long seen as essential forces in school change, **principals have been largely absent from conversations defining their own role as school leaders**" [emphasis added] (NAESP, 2002, p. vi).

Cagney surfaced the concern about the voice of principals being absent from conversations about empowerment and the role of principals by stating:

> Then there is another issue … [responsibilities] end up being downloaded, and this is the old paradigm that we have been operating within for years. We keep taking on this work on top [of the current workload]. So the principal is a key person in the organization. Their job is to keep growing and growing and growing, because the thinking is that we want to empower these people and give them an opportunity to be the decision makers. But I am … saying "Holey mojoley" I can't do all of this anymore. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and I

> think that is when we start doing the gerbil routine[17], because we do not have the time. One of the things that I jotted down this afternoon is time for leadership. You know time for decision-making, but there has got to be time for reflection. (Cagney)

Beem (2003) reflected a similar belief that responsibilities are continuously downloaded onto principals' plates because of their key role at the school-based level.

> But over the last few decades of school reform, the role of the principal has changed. They are no longer just their buildings' instructional leaders. They're social workers, one-person human resources departments and budget officers. They must wade through labyrinthine … rules, answer the demands of students with wide-ranging social problems and cater to the needs of their staffs and the schools' families. Yet one fact of the principal's job hasn't changed. Principals still are held accountable for their schools' successes or failures…. (pp. 27-28)

The research participants believed that there are principals who view empowerment as simply "downloading" increased levels of responsibility and accountability without the delegation of the requisite authority. Bailey spoke to the tension associated with the suspicion some principals have about empowerment and the impact it might have on the role of the principal and school leadership:

> Well I have to be convinced, not convinced; I have to feel assured that there is value in this. That I am empowered to do this and that I can follow through and have the [authority] to actually be able to do some of these things. (Bailey)

This conversation brought forward the tensions associated with empowerment as part of the implementation of SBM/SBDM. The feelings that school improvement advocates have not involved principals in the conversations about the delegation of the requisite authority needed to achieve school improvement through empowerment. That there has been little or no recognition of the need for increased time for principals to deal with the current responsibilities let alone those associated with empowerment. Not engaging school-based leaders in such conversations exacerbates the current workload situation, increases the level of suspicion, and erodes the confidence and trust needed to support the implementation of SBM/SBDM. The belief that there is value in empowering those at the school level to make the decisions required to achieve school improvement goals is lost in the perceived lack of understanding of the authority needed and the workload situation of principals.

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[17] Gerbil routine was a metaphor used by members of the research participants to denote decision-making conversations that appear to go round in circles never resulting in a decision, which is similar to a gerbil running in a wheel but never going anywhere.

During the course of the conversations each research participant repeatedly affirmed the need for more time to handle the current workload let alone the increased responsibility associated with any school improvement initiative. The research participants concurred that there exists a tension associated with too little time for planning, discussion and reflection. They affirmed that educational leaders clearly understand that the successful implementation of any initiative requires significant time to plan, engage staff and others in conversations regarding the initiative, and reflection. The research participants keenly understood the significance of the tension associated with the concept of "doing more with less." Lambert (2003) stressed the importance of dialogue and reflection and its impact on the determination of the effectiveness of leadership by stating, "It is only when a school staff has undertaken skillful work using inquiry, **dialogue**, and **reflection** to achieve student performance goals that a school can be said to have achieved high leadership capacity…. [emphasis added] (p. 5). Huffstutter, Lindelow, Scott, Smith and Watters found that: "Lack of time to carry out all the duties specified … is a major source of stress for school executives. In turn, stress reduces leaders' capacity for intelligently managing their time" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 374).

Cagney spoke to the tension associated with empowerment and noted the concerns articulated by principals.

> But empowerment plays significantly in the bureaucratic concept. I know that politics makes strange bedfellows but we do talk about empowerment and how it tends to end up translating … "Go ahead and make your own decisions, explore what you think are the right avenues, and we will let you know if you get it right or not…." If you are going to give me the job and responsibilities to make the decisions then I have to [have the authority] in order to be [held] accountable for those decisions. But don't start pulling things back because I am not making the decisions that you are looking for [me] to make. If you want me to build something, tell me what it is going to look like and I will be pleased to [build it]. (Cagney)

Considerable tension exists when school-based leaders are told that they are empowered because their jurisdiction and/or province adopted SBM/SBDM. This tension is what Gadamer characterized as the "place of hermeneutics, the *Spielraum*, the *Abstand*. This is a place of interchange, trade," the exchange of ideas, "a competitive marketplace which depends on both the capital of tradition, fore-structure, and historical effects, and the risk of factors attached to the innovative interpretations that are produced" (as cited in Gallager, 1992, p. 139). The tension associated with this exchange of ideas depends on how principals experience the aforementioned translation of empowerment as having to make the "right" or the "correct" decisions. The determination of the "rightness" or "correctness" of a decision by others creates a significant tension and was viewed by some of the research participants to be diametrically opposite to the purpose of SBM/SBDM, and the decision-making environment intended to be created through such empowerment. "Unless stakeholders are empowered with authority," SBM/SBDM "is merely a theory, not a practice. Therefore, the distribution of authority is crucial…." (Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 182).

The lens through which another views the rightness or correctness of a decision is based on what Foucault called the "regime of truth that governs the production of truthful and hence socially acceptable statements and acts" (as cited in Ransom, 1997, p. 148). Gadamer stated that "knowledge of a unique kind… knowledge which provides science with the ultimate data from which it constructs the knowledge of nature… and indeed from all conceptual knowledge" conveys truth (1975/1989, pp. 97-98). That truth, Gadamer stated, "lies in every…experience is recognized and at the same time mediated with historical consciousness" (1975/1989, p. 98).

The tension associated with the implementation of empowerment is related to the differences of opinion that occur in the exchange of ideas. The difference of opinion arises as different truths collide and are in conflict as individuals view empowerment through different lens mediated by their particular beliefs. The conflict is clearly evident to the research participants and they felt that it was extremely dysfunctional. It was extremely dysfunctional because they felt that some of their colleagues believe that what they experience is in direct opposition to what they are told or have read the intent of empowerment is about. Principals see the inconsistency as they compare what they are told to what they experience. Such contradictions do not motivate principals to vigorously pursue the goals and objectives of school improvement through empowerment and the principals' efforts in such situations are believed to simply perpetuate the empowerment facade.

## The tensions of competing interests

Added to the concerns about empowerment were the tensions with the "competing" and "conflicting expectations" of a society that continues to become more complex, and in which public schools struggle "to address rapid and unprecedented social and technological changes.... At the same time, they are at risk of collapsing under the weight of competing and often conflicting expectations" (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 17). Such competing and conflicting expectations significantly increase the tension felt by principals. Authentic partnerships with parents and the broader school community emerged as critical components of school effectiveness in such an environment. "*Flexibility* is basic to communities in motion if fluctuations, feedback, and surprises are to lead to change rather than disorientation in schools" [italics in original] (Lambert, 1995, p. 40). Diversity within a school community, therefore, brings with it a complexity that can be an enormous challenge as well as a tremendous opportunity for principals. But, competing and conflicting expectations of a complex society further exacerbates the difficulties associated with attempts to define effective leadership.

Cagney pointed out that there exists a considerable diversity in communities and that this diversity contributes to a multiplicity of meanings. A multiplicity of meanings makes it very challenging for principals to develop consensus on school improvement initiatives and to maintain a sense of cohesion within the school.

> I want to talk about providing information up the organization. You see I don't think that we can say that decentralization is about (this or that) exclusively. I think that an organization with decentralized centres makes for a lot more collaboration and pure collaboration. Pulling together around [central] themes [is the challenge], or else you really do not have an organization that ties together in any way. (Cagney)

Cagney raised the tension associated with diversity and the potential for fragmentation within a school division or a school "since shared decision-making promotes diversity instead of standardized conformity" (Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 184). What emerged reinforced the belief that collaboration and the dialogue that occurs, as part of the collaborative process, is critical in SBM/SBDM. Shared decision-making requires that principals be effective at collaboration and at building consensus among competing interests to support decisions. The research participants believed that to do this, principals need to build effective relationships within diverse communities. Adding additional management and leadership responsibilities with SBM/SBDM but continuing to expect conformity, was perceived to exacerbate the complexities associated with an already challenging leadership role. Bailey, however, attempted to address the issue by pointing out that not everyone needs to be involved in the decision-making process and not everyone wants to be involved or involved to the same degree. People want the "opportunity" to be involved and want to feel that it is their choice as to their degree of involvement.

> Not everybody has the need to be involved at the same level of critical and creative thinking [about decisions]. (Bailey)

Bailey's point was that effective principals know what to delegate, to whom, and when to delegate decision-making authority. The research participants continued the conversation about competing interests, collaborative decision-making, achieving consensus, and how challenging that process can be for principals. As an example of the complexities associated with diversity, Sam referred to the principals' group and how difficult it is to get a diverse group of principals with competing interests to make decisions.

> Yeah, but you know … I think of sometimes how the [principals] sit there and can never reach agreement on anything, and we go home … frustrated. (Sam)

> I don't think that we even try to [make a decision]; do we? (Cagney)

Bailey noted that to achieve consensus in a diverse group, there has to be considerable opportunity given for dialogue. Being able to facilitate the dialogue process is critical because everyone must be given an opportunity to understand the competing interests and appreciate each other's position.

> Lots and lots and lots of dialogue; … in order to do the planning, in order to do the accountability kind of thing, people have to be talking and they have to be doing it lots, and they have to be working together. (Bailey)

Sam expanded on the idea of "working together" by noting that there is considerable diversity among schools and that in a SBM/SBDM milieu consensus can often be achieved amongst a smaller group of principals. Similar needs may emerge that allow a certain group of principals to work cooperatively together to address the diverse needs of their particular schools and communities.

> Of course community schools[18] and perimeter schools[19] are not going to agree with French Immersion and suburban schools. But … [in a SBM/SBDM milieu] that does not matter; you can accommodate those different needs. I think that is why… Cagney, we feel so often that there is no change [in a centralized system]. Because the only change we ever get is when [fifty-plus principals] … agree on something and that never happens. (Sam)

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[18] Community Schools are primarily located in the inner city and have a statistically significant portion of students and their families are high needs due to the negative impact of complex socio-economic factors.

[19] Perimeter Schools are primarily located between the inner city and the suburban area, and have a statistically significant number of students and families with some high needs due to the negative impact of complex socio-economic factors. A distinguishing feature is that there can be a fifty per cent turnover of the student body during the school year.

What emerged was the understanding that considerable tension exists within school divisions when they try to achieve consensus to ensure standardized conformity. The move to standardized conformity in diverse communities with competing interests creates tension. Instead of ensuring conformity, Prasch contended that school divisions should celebrate "the diversity among its schools" and champion "the right of school sites to be different" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 184). Cagney reflected this tension:

> Well for ten years, … in the secondary [schools] … we … worked to make all of [them] … look the same…. The only way not to compete with one another [was] to make all schools look the same, so there is no significant difference…. Then we get the *Collegiate Review* coming out and saying, "My God, you have to create Centres of Excellence, beacons, lighthouses, [and] you need to differentiate programming...." That flies in the face [of the status quo], … [and] it begs for us to look at differentiating what we do in response to our community. (Cagney)

There was a feeling that SBM/SBDM increases this level of diversity by creating "islands" of educational entrepreneurship as principals strive to make their school a centre of excellence that attracts and retains students. Principals in such situations "compete" for students, which increases the tension. In such an environment principals must be able to effectively market the school to attract students. SBM/SBDM was seen as promoting competing interests by fostering an environment in which principals focus on "their" school and their students and their goals as opposed to the schools, students and goals of the division. A few of the research participants felt that principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu must possess effective marketing skills.

In this regard, the authority and autonomy to make decisions and to see them through was determined to be critical. Cagney spoke to this when referring back to an interview with a principal currently operating in a SBM/SBDM milieu. That principal talked about the role of the principal and the control principals have over the decision-making process. Cagney felt that a large diverse group of principals with competing interests could achieve cohesion and consensus. Cagney provided the following example of a decision arrived at collaboratively by high school principals that directed funds to support an elementary school language literacy initiative.

> Now [the principals] made that decision on a whole system basis, [to focus] on language literacy. In fact secondary schools decided to lop off a chunk of their budgets to support the elementary literacy program … knowing that they would reap the benefits…. They are quite prepared to continue doing that once they get a chance to see the results. They were able to do that; they did not have to go through all of [the] barriers [in a centralized system]. I mean there are barriers, lots of barriers, there are lots of good ideas if we had the freedom to fly we would fly high. (Cagney)

Cagney pointed out that barriers exist in centralized decision-making mileux that focus on standardized conformity and inhibit the implementation of innovative ideas designed to address the unique needs of students because they are often perceived to promote diversity. The point being made by Cagney centred on control over the decision-making process, the effective use of results, and the authority of principals to focus on the diverse needs of students. Results were seen as an important part of accountability because in an SBM/SBDM milieu "principals not only have increased responsibility but also increased accountability" (Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 189).

The research participants felt that centralized systems do not promote diversity, as there is trepidation associated with moving away from standardized conformity. When those same systems say they have adopted SBM/SBDM, principals see the inconsistency, and therefore the contradiction when conformity is still promoted through standardized structures and functions. Standardized structures and functions do not support "the right of school sites to be different." Principals know they must work effectively with the diversity that exists within the school and community. They know that this is an enormous challenge. They also know that they must have the flexibility to work collaboratively with students, staff and the community to validate and affirm competing interests and conflicting expectations, while at the same time achieving consensus on central themes that focus school improvement efforts around which they can pull together.

## The tensions inherent in reform agendas

In discussing the connection between effective schools and effective leaders the research participants engaged in a conversation about reform agendas, and the impact they have on the definition of effectiveness. Lambert (2003) stated, "How we define leadership frames how people will participate in it (p. 4). Cagney spoke to the issue of enframement:

> For me, just thinking back, reflecting on a couple of comments in the preamble, for example, "every attempt at reform and restructuring is invested with its own particular philosophy or agenda." Food for thought for me is the various attempts at reform are out there from the Meyers, Norris, Penny, *Administrative Review* through the rural school document, *Collegiate Review* document, are all embedded in different philosophies and agendas. [How then] do you define what constitutes effective leadership? It depends which agenda you're looking at, which philosophy. Mixing up all of those metaphors in our workplace presents all kinds of challenges in my mind in terms of how … you define effectiveness. Which metaphor is operant, or should be operant, because they are very different metaphors and philosophies. (Cagney)

Heidegger wanted to point out that much of modern thought is formed under the guidance of scientific method. He believed that even when individuals were conscious of the utilization of scientific method, they did not see the broader implications of its use.

He believed that it determined "the way that we view the world and understanding ourselves" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 176). Heidegger felt that "enframing (Ge-stell)… sets upon man [sic] himself [sic], forms his [sic] understanding of everything and provides his [sic] standards for ordering" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 176). Sam indicated that what constitutes effective leadership is determined on the basis of the paradigms[20] from which individuals approach the question.

> That's a good point… because the paradigm you're operating from makes a big difference. (Sam)

Cagney expanded on this by stating that principals can be discussing a variety of topics but may be approaching them from entirely different points-of-view based on the particular paradigms that principals bring to such conversations.

> I find from time to time, that in a room we'll all be talking, but we'll be talking from different paradigms… even within education, we have individually scripted paradigms. (Cagney)

These "individually scripted paradigms" result in multiple definitions of leadership and effectiveness, which intensifies the tensions associated with such conversations. To achieve a deeper level of understanding of leadership effectiveness the issue of individually scripted paradigms must be addressed. The research participants gave an example of the significance of individually scripted paradigms and how they enframed the determination of effective leadership. They indicated that the reform agenda of the province and the school division is based on a belief in "constructivism,"[21] which is linked to the concept of "learning community."[22] Sam indicated that when constructivism and learning organization are the foundational constructs, a possible meaning that enframes the definition of leadership effectiveness is:

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[20] The definition of paradigm is "a philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school or discipline within which theories, laws, and generalizations and the experiments performed in support of them are formulated" taken from *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition.

> A leader is any individual that can make a difference in your life, because what they are really [doing is] leading you … to discover who … and what you are, … what your potential is, and where you can go with your future. (Sam)

Cagney subscribed to this view by stating:

> But, if we have some goals around student learning then we need to have some goals around instruction [and] around constantly improving. So that is kind of where I see myself. Whatever I can do as a leader to help teachers get where they are going. That is what I do and I spend my whole day doing that. I am not in there leading the choral group, … I **ask questions** [and]… **I am the learner** [emphasis added]. (Cagney)

Cagney and Sam believed that helping teachers to discover their instructional leadership skills by asking questions and engaging teachers in reflection on practice[23] is effective leadership when constructivism and learning organization are the foundational constructs. In doing so, Cagney and Sam felt they learned more about being effective leaders. Cagney and Sam worked collaboratively with teachers to "construct meaning," which is consistent with the foundational constructs of constructivism and learning organizations. Lambert et al. (1995) stated that "the work of Dewey, Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, and Feuerstein" had a significant influence on "conceptions about learning and set the stage for the emergence of constructivist learning theory" (p. 21). Leadership, therefore, that assists someone to "discover who" and "what" they are by "asking questions" and learning together is enframed within the view of constructivism in which learning and meaning evolves with the changing of personal interpretations. Ackerman, Donaldson, and van der Bogert (1996) reflected a similar point-of-view when they defined effective leaders as "sense makers," whose

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[21] Constructivism implies development: evolving world views; changing cultural, historical, and personal interpretations; emerging intelligence and interaction patterns…. Constructivism necessitates a dynamic conception of intelligence, learning, and reality. Lambert, L (1995). The constructivist leader. New York: Teachers College Press p. 191.

[22] The definition of learning community or organization used is: a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it. Senge, P.M. (2000). *Educational Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 22

[23] Reflection on practice implies reflective practice – that is, thinking about… practice and enabling others to think about theirs… how we do what we do – methods, techniques, strategies, procedures… reflection enables us to reconsider how we do things, which of course can lead to new and better approaches to our work. Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

> success at leading hinges, to a great degree, on their ability to see clearly the school's core functions, to evaluate events in light of those functions, and to **help the members of the school community conduct their work and their relationships in ways that serve these core functions**. [emphasis added] (p. 1)

Lambert (1995) stated that constructivist leadership is "the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling," and that leadership "is defined as a concept transcending individuals, roles, and behaviors. Therefore, anyone in the educational community – teachers, administrators, parents, students – can engage in leadership actions" (p. 29).

The research participants felt that reform agendas influence the creation of structures and functions to support the particular agenda. Currently, the division has a centralized bureaucratic structure with various functions that operate on a decision-making continuum from centralized to decentralized. Sam explored the tension that exists when a constructivist philosophy is espoused, but the division's organizational structures and functions support centralization and therefore do not align with the philosophical beliefs associated with constructivism.

> To me without a certain structure you cannot create the function. I kept sitting there thinking that it does not matter who [the chief executive officer] is [or] what vision [that individual has]. How will it work if you do not have the structure in place that facilitates making it happen? (Sam)

Sam indicated that there must be a direct link between the philosophical beliefs and values of the espoused reform agenda and the structures and functions that support that agenda. If the structures and functions are not aligned then there exists an obvious and significant tension. Cagney expanded on this by noting the tension that exists between a decentralization philosophy and the "will" needed by those within the organization to change their way of "thinking and doing."

> A significant part of decentralization is really a "no-brainer," in the sense that ... school budgets and staffing [are already decentralized, therefore] it would be very simple to decentralize if one had the will to go there. But the philosophy is, I think, [that] you have to dismantle a whole way of thinking and doing things [first]. (Cagney)

> I hear what you are saying. The philosophy precedes and is an integral part of the structure. I guess that is what I was trying to get at.... It is a structure that has a different locus, locus of control. So if you want to shift it philosophically to [control at] the school level ... then you have to restructure. (Sam)

This conversation articulated the tension associated with a reform agenda when there is little evidence of organizational alignment to support it. There is a shift in the *locus of control* with the adoption of SBM/SBDM. In a centralized system the locus of control is at central office with the requisite structures and functions put in place to support that control. A contradiction exists when complex community needs require that principals have the flexibility to address them, but organizational structures and functions require standardized conformity. The adoption of SBM/SBDM shifts the locus of control to the school and in doing so an organization is encouraging flexible solutions to complex community needs. Continuing to maintain an organizational structure that is representative of centralized decision-making is a contradiction. A significant tension exists when the "will" to shift that locus of control to the schools is not there. "The transference of decision-making power cannot be effective without the willingness of the superintendent to share power" (Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 186). By extension, there must be a willingness on the part of the principal to shift the locus of control by putting the structures and functions in place to empower students, teachers, parents and members of the school community. Ennis expanded upon the tension associated with "will" by identifying the significance of beliefs, values and culture.

> You can't take [SBM/SBDM] and apply it just anywhere. You need [the] beliefs, values and culture that support it. (Ennis)

Ennis' statement is consistent with Leithwood's findings regarding transformational leadership, which focuses on getting people within an organization to "think reflectively and critically" about practice (1999, pp. 183-184), and to ensure that "appropriate models of practices and values" are in place. Leithwood stipulated that building shared norms and beliefs develops the culture of the organization. Ennis pointed out the tension that exists when an organization adopts a particular reform agenda but does not conform to its philosophic beliefs and values.

This conversation accentuated the struggle the research participants experienced with the contradictions they see when the philosophical beliefs and the values that form the foundation of a particular reform agenda are not evident within the organization. The research participants felt that to demonstrate effective leadership, principals must ensure that the requisite beliefs and values be developed collaboratively such that they are in place prior to the adoption and implementation of any particular reform. Further, the research participants noted the tension that exists when participants do not "believe in" and are not "committed to" a particular reform. The implementation of such a reform is seen as a sham as there is no real evidence of change.

### The tension between control and autonomy

Ennis noted that provincial and divisional environments, in which principals operate, influence the implementation of any reform. Ennis indicated that some western provinces are predisposed to SBM/SBDM, while others are less so.

> So the question is, "Is [our province] predisposed [to local control]?" Do we have the values and beliefs [needed to] … graft this new system [SBM/SBDM] on top? (Ennis)

The research participants viewed control and autonomy as a key difference between centralized decision-making and SBM/SBDM. But, to determine whether a principal was actually empowered and possessed the requisite control and autonomy, Cagney felt that the research participants needed to give due consideration to how curriculum is developed and implemented. The position put forward by Cagney is representative of the stance of Sergiovanni who stated that there are limits to flexibility, control and autonomy in SBM/SBDM. He pointed out "ends, in the form of standardized standards and assessments, ultimately determine means" (2000, p. 77). Departments of education specify standards and then test to ensure the standards are met. By doing so Sergiovanni noted that they are outlining the "kinds of teaching needed" (2000, p. 77).

The research participants engaged in a conversation about the "locus of control" and the "structure of the curriculum" and how that impacts on control and autonomy.

> You see the locus of control is on a whole different plane.... We were talking at some point earlier [about]... the structure of the curriculum. I [feel] that [province's] curriculum is much more directive than ours. (Cagney)
>
> Oh, definitely. (Sam)
>
> You see in [our province] it is all about teacher autonomy, it is hugely about teacher autonomy and teachers having control over their own processes. So ... when you look at the curriculum ... [there are] foundational objectives and not a ... lot more. I mean the teachers fill in the gaps, they creatively write their courses. (Cagney)
>
> Would subscribing to the Western Canadian Protocol make a difference to that? (Bailey)
>
> Yeah, I think it would. (Sam)
>
> Well it probably would because it is more of a directed curriculum. But again, you see, in [our province] our culture in education is "please don't interfere with my right to be autonomous." I mean I hear staff talking [about] this in terms of issues or the thought of accountability becoming [the central] focus. They are saying that if I am going to teach to an exam it is going be my own damn exam. I don't want to teach to anybody else's exam, thank you very much. So we are back again into teacher autonomy.... (Cagney)

What emerged from this conversation was the perception that teachers believe they are in control of "their own processes" related to the methodology used to transmit curriculum content to students and the learning strategies utilized. Teachers, therefore, perceive that they possess a considerable amount of control and autonomy. This perception that control and autonomy is at the classroom level is consistent with SBM/SBDM principles. But, the position put forward by Sergiovanni was that as departments of education specify the ends, they enframe the means thereby limiting control and autonomy. In addition, the research participants articulated the perception by teachers that they are in control and autonomous contributes to the resistance they put forward to the empowerment of students, parents and community members. A tension exists when teachers perceive they are in control and autonomous but in actuality that control and autonomy is limited. Further, the perception by teachers that they are in control and autonomous causes significant tension to emerge as others are empowered as part of the decision-making process that is an integral part of SBM/SBDM. This resistance to change seems to centre on the loss of power.

Cagney expanded on the conversation by raising the tension associated with teacher autonomy and the challenge faced by principals in an "era of increasing accountability."

> It is kind of interesting to listen because I was just thinking about the notion of teacher autonomy and core-curriculum. The [province's] curriculum is … filled with opportunity for teacher discretion, in terms of adaptation [and] selection…. I think that we have a huge amount of decentralization … already in that teachers feel a right to their autonomy. So that becomes an interesting challenge when you have got a curriculum that supports that kind of decentralization. Decisions are being made right at the classroom level, so … as a leader … in an era of increasing accountability, what … does your role become? (Cagney)

> I remember as a teacher [that] doing [lesson] planning documents was an expectation. You worked for administrators who expected that. Then you became an administrator and [lesson plans were] part of our culture, something that people did. I have slowly watched the erosion of even that. If you say to people that I know you are autonomous and … you [are] the instructional leader…. [But I want a copy of your lesson and unit plans in] whatever format you want. Well I have [had] some amazing [negative] responses to that request. (Sam)

> Well sure, because people think that you are suddenly infringing on their autonomy. (Bailey)

What does the principal's role become in an era of increasing accountability when the provincial environment is perceived to be supportive of teacher autonomy? The tensions that exist in such an environment have a tremendous impact on the role of the principal and upon principals themselves. Cagney attempted to answer the question by putting forward the idea that an effective principal finds a "balance" that satisfies the need for public accountability while at the same time meeting the desire of teachers for professional autonomy. In doing so Cagney raised another tension – empowerment misapplied can lead to disempowerment and the creation of a leadership "vacuum."

> I was grappling with my thinking around empowerment and leadership, because when we empower people we give the leadership away, in a way. When we share leadership ultimately leadership can be stronger. I was thinking about how that is an interesting balance, especially as it sits in culture. We do a lot of this in education, we empower people to become part of committees and do this work and play along, like gerbils, but I think that sometimes what happens when we misapply the notion of empowerment and the notion of collaboration is we disempower the organization because leadership gets sucked into a vacuum. (Cagney)

Ennis addressed the notion of a leadership vacuum and how we might avoid such a vacuum. To avoid a leadership vacuum a real partnership must exist that would see parents being given some control by being treated as "clients" who have a vested interest in the decisions being made regarding the education of their children. A real partnership would see a productive and positive exchange of ideas between parents and teachers such that a workable solution satisfactory to all would result. To expand upon this notion of balancing control and autonomy, Ennis gave an example of the tension that exists within the current decision-making structure.

> I sat on [a] committee ... briefly because I quit. I said that I want parents to be on this committee. [The response was,] "Oh we can't have parents. How would we pick parents fairly?" [I responded], "Well the same way that you pick teachers or administrators." The result was "No can't do [that]" and sure enough [it] came out [that] some of the parents weren't satisfied [with the report card] instrument.

> So it might have been a great instrument, but we have clients [who need to be involved in the decision-making, but client] is a dirty, dirty word. (Ennis)

Ennis pointed out the tension that exists when parents are not given some control by being given input into decisions. Cagney did not agree but added that the tension might not be linked to the idea that teachers have "clients," as much as it is an issue of "control" and the perception that teachers have lost a significant amount of control over their professional lives. Ungerleider (2003) spoke to the tension associated with control by stating, "At issue is power. Any increase in the amount of influence that parents exercise, is perceived as a decrease in the power exercised by teachers" (p. 170). Cagney affirmed this position:

> Yes, but what people struggle with is… [giving] up control and I think that is part of what is happening. Teachers are feeling that they are losing control of their world. If you take a look at how we self select in the career of education, most of us have known nothing but education for our whole lives. So as a group we are not huge risk takers. I mean we have gone right from the cradle to retirement doing the same thing. We are somewhat change aversive… as an occupational group. (Cagney)

The tension associated with power and the perception that teachers are "losing control of their world" is important. It is important because such a perception raises the question: "Whose world is it?" To believe that it is solely the teachers' world increases the tension associated with the debate about the purpose of education and the importance of students and parents in that world. What also emerged from this conversation about teacher autonomy was the notion that teachers are "change aversive." Ungerleider (2003) spoke to this by stating, "In comparison to the dynamic nature of many aspects of our society, schools appear static and resistant to change" (p. 267). He went on and stated, "Teachers are not disposed to change. Those who are drawn to teaching are attracted by prevailing norms and practices" (p. 271).

Sam addressed the change aversive notion by articulating how others in positions of power are as resistant to change as teachers. In a centralized system senior administrators seem unwilling to empower principals to make staffing decisions. Such a belief finds support in the following statement: "Effective leadership requires that principals have the autonomy to make decisions based on needs of individual schools. Effective leadership also depends on having the authority to hold people accountable to results" (NAESP, 2002, p. 3). Lambert provided additional support to this notion:

> Schools and school districts are among the more hierarchical of organization. Such structures of domination and control have been considered the backbone of modern "efficient" organizations for several centuries.... Hierarchy and roles establish and maintain authoritative power, that is, power and control over the decisions and
> behaviors of others. (1995, p. 99)

Exercising power and control over the decisions and behaviours of principals was determined to be a critical issue by the research participants. Having the autonomy to make staffing decisions was deemed by the participants to be a key example of power and control, and a critical issue if principals are to be held accountable for school improvement.

> To get success as a learner you have to have the right resources. So if it means having two full time resource room teachers, if that is what success brings and if it is measurable, then let us deploy the money to the local school and let them hire whatever staff they think they need to make [the] magic so those kids can achieve, ... can feel good, and will want to be there. (Sam)

> For example in our school this year we are losing somewhere between a third and a half of our staff. That is just going to devastate the culture [of the school], big time. But then ... you know ... as a leader you work to protect against that

> happening because at the same time we give lip service to [the] building of relationships and building the community. How can you build community when you have that amount of change? (Cagney)

> Who is making the [staffing] decisions? Who is making the decision about who goes where? (Ennis)

> I think that is the question. (Terry)

A key question is, “Who should make staffing decisions?” The research participants’ felt that a significant tension exists when principals are not delegated the power and control to make the requisite staffing decisions they feel are necessary to ensure school improvement. Clearly a tension exists in an organization that espouses SBM/SBDM and holds principals accountable for school improvement, but does not give principals control of the decision-making process relative to staffing. The research participants felt that for principals to create effective schools they need to be able to select staff. Selecting staff not only allows the principal to meet the identified needs of the school but also allows the principal to promote a certain set of beliefs and values, which support the culture of the school and community, and any school improvement initiative.

A tension also exists when a belief in SBM/SBDM is espoused but teachers or principals are not willing to share power. Shared decision-making must involve stakeholders and demonstrate authentic partnerships in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

### The tensions with accountability, autonomy and assessment

At one of the earliest meetings the research participants engaged in a conversation about accountability. Some of the research participants felt that to be effective principals needed to create an environment that balances the need to be accountable with the desire by teachers to be autonomous. As the research participants progressed in the conversations about accountability the issue of assessment surfaced. The surfacing of the tensions surrounding assessment brought to the forefront the challenge principals' face in trying to find the balance between accountability and autonomy, and the tensions associated with assessment practices. The research participants began this discussion by reflecting on the educational environment in the province.

> Now I think about [our province] and [our division] and I am trying to think what jumps off the page. (Cagney)
>
> Core curriculum, common essential learning, resource based learning…. (Sam)
>
> Curriculum actualisation. See the word accountability around us is almost like it is a negative, a dirty word. (Bailey)

Ungerleider affirmed this belief when he stated, "Canadian teachers' unions have resisted the demands for greater accountability and parents' desires to play a larger role in the education of their children" (2003, p. 170). Sam tried to expand on Bailey's statement by giving an example related to teacher evaluation.

> I'm trying to come up with an example; we had a couple of school superintendents [whose] … role was … to evaluate first and second year teachers and administrators. What that did for the division was … [provide] consistency and continuity. [It was also] transparent [because] the documents were there and everyone was judged according to [what was in] those documents…. Then … [the responsibility for teacher evaluation was shifted from superintendents to principals and] the change started to happen because [fifty-plus] school leaders … lead in quite different ways, therefore the way they evaluate teachers is quite different. [There are also significant challenges] when [you are] part of the same union and [considered to be] … a colleague? I agree with you Bailey, … the way we're structured doesn't lend itself to people wanting … feedback [on] goals and for [professional] development [purposes]. I'm not sure how I feel about what we've gained since we've delegated [the responsibility for teacher evaluation] to the school level. (Sam)

Sam surfaced the tensions associated with "consistency, continuity and transparency" of an evaluation process. Sam articulated the tension that emerges when principals "lead in quite different ways" such that teachers perceive they are being evaluated differently. Sam's contention was that there is significant tension when as part of accountability there is a need for consistency, continuity and transparency, but as a result of decentralization there is a perception of inconsistency, and a lack of continuity and transparency. Smith and Piele stated, "one of the most sensitive issues among teachers may be observation of their teaching" (1997, p. 271). They stated further that:

> To benefit, a teacher who is observed must be able to trust the observer in at least three ways: First, the teacher must believe that the observer intends no harm; second, the teacher must be convinced that the criteria and procedures of evaluation are **predictable** and **open**; and third, the teacher must have confidence that the observer will provide information to improve the nuts-and-bolts of his or her teaching [emphasis added]. (p. 271)

Principals' belonging to the same union was also viewed by a few of the research participants as contributing to the tension associated with the effectiveness of teacher evaluation. Bailey raised what the research participants believed was a contributing factor to this tension. The issue of teacher autonomy and the way education is structured has teachers operating in isolation. That isolation contributes to an ethos of teacher autonomy.

> Teachers develop an ethos that says, when I go into my room and close the door, I am the king of the castle, and you don't interfere with the king of the castle. (Bailey)

Cagney questioned the tension associated with evaluation. Teachers consistently evaluate students to determine whether they have learned what is being taught, but teachers are hesitant to be evaluated as part of their accountability to the public.

> We don't want to be evaluated! We talk about setting up rubrics for kids so that they appreciate the standards that are expected of their performance in the classroom, but God forbid that we do that with our own profession.... We continue to be insular around the whole notion of accountability. We don't want to give up power and control of what we do. (Cagney)

Cagney raised the tension associated with the mystique surrounding evaluation and how this mystique increases the tension that exists between teachers and the public regarding measurement and accountability

> But we are talking about measurement and accountability.... You don't just throw dollars at something and ... not require accountability for results. We do that over and over and over again in our organization. We throw dollars at stuff and we never finish the loop, we never do the evaluation piece.... Organizationally we should be beginning with evaluation in mind. I think that if we did more of that, and it has nothing to do with decentralization, **we would have less of a fight from our publics**. We do put evaluation out there, **but it is not evaluation that anyone can understand**. [emphasis added] (Cagney)

The idea that in order to be more accountable evaluation needs to be transparent and understandable linked to a point raised by Ennis. Ennis pointed out that over the years the expectations and demands for higher levels of satisfaction by the public have increased significantly. Ennis ventured that to be more accountable educators need to understand the "market mentality" and be able to demonstrate improvement accordingly.

> People have higher and higher expectations for satisfaction whether it is doctors, lawyers or schools.... So I think that we need to be saying; "Are you satisfied? Are you getting what you want?" We may not please them all, but we need to take that market mentality and we need to be able to demonstrate that ... we measure our kids and we see that they are making progress that is appropriate for each individual and as a group. (Ennis)

> Let's maybe just finish [that] thought. I can tell you something I wrestled with... between what was decentralization and what was ... good business practice, ... good educational practice that ... [is] consistent with my philosophy. I mean I am very conservative; I really buy into the notion of results [and] I really buy into the notion of achievement.... I had to grapple with what it was that I was feeling good about. I need to say that it was all of those things. We saw very good

> business practices [and] we saw outstanding examples of best practice in education.... There are so many built-in checkpoints inherent within ... accountability and I thought, boy if I were working in that system I could sure see my performance going up because I am so accountable to my peer group. I am so accountable in so many ways [and] everything is transparent. (Cagney)

Bailey disagreed and brought forward the tension that exists with this line of thinking. Bailey's concern about such a belief system was that it tends to cause educators to lose sight of their focus on students, and become far too focused on the needs, wants and demands of adults.

> So much of what becomes important, as an adult, is so difficult to measure. When you talk about accountability, often times what happens is that you try to turn kids or teachers into math and reading scores. Intellectually everybody knows that is not [appropriate]. But a lot of people are held accountable and they do it.... We boil everything down and somehow it ends up being a percent that equates to a dollar value. I have always had trouble with this because so much of what makes you successful as an adult is so difficult to measure and is so situational. (Bailey)

The conversation about accountability was one of the most challenging conversations for the research participants, and part of that was captured in the tension inherent in the comment "what makes you successful as an adult is so difficult to measure."

Cagney pointed out a similar tension centred on this same issue. Educators do engage in conversations about autonomy and being responsible and accountable. But educators want their autonomy and see responsibility and accountability to be connected to their view of professionalism. A move to more public accountability is viewed as a significant challenge as it increases the tension associated with their view of professional autonomy.

> We all have this very left movement in education ... and ... professional autonomy [is a] huge part of that. Now in [the last] ten [to] fifteen years ... the

> pendulum started swinging back the other direction. Now all around us … the pendulum has shifted to a more conservative model, one of accountability. But this autonomous crew in [our province] … have stayed in what is an older paradigm. That speaks to our culture and I think it makes it really difficult to shift. (Cagney)

Ungerleider (2003) articulated the concern that professional autonomy is being interpreted by some teachers as being accountable to their professional organization and not to the public. He stated, "One obstacle… is teachers' reluctance to being observed by other adults" (p. 173). The tension associated with student and teacher evaluation and Cagney's perception that the "pendulum" is swinging back to a "more conservative model" of accountability to earn public trust was articulated further:

> The concept of standards – academic standards for students and professional standards for what constitutes quality in teaching – has broad appeal. Educators, policymakers, parents, business leaders and others seem to like the notion of making public our expectations for students and adults, and then holding people accountable to those expectations. (NAESP, 2002, p. 1)

Ennis expanded upon this view by exploring the issue of evaluation and accountability further. Ennis pointed out that through the evaluation of teachers we attempt to be accountable to the public for their investment in public education and "what is done in classrooms and schools." Ennis introduced what was termed "the basics" or what Ennis maintained were the main reasons for evaluation.

> I think it is appropriate that there be greater accountability, not only for money spent, but for what is done in classrooms and schools. I think we could devote lifetimes to assessment of teachers and … administrators. We could spend more time assessing than we do producing. But I think there are some basics, for me… safety, relationships, and learning [are the basics]…. If the feedback is exclusively for me, I wouldn't feel so threatened, I won't be as defensive, it comes back solely to me, and hopefully I can grow [from] … the experience. (Ennis)

Ennis pointed out the tensions associated with evaluation by exploring the following questions. Is the feedback intended to be "exclusively" for the student, the teacher or the principal? Is the feedback to be part of a process utilized to report to the public as part of accountability? If so, what will be reported, how will it be reported, and how will it be used? Ennis surfaced the significant tension that centers on the need for greater accountability while adhering to the principles and purpose of student, teacher and principal evaluation. Misuse of such information increases the tension, and breeds fear and defensiveness. Ungerleider addressed this concern.

> THE POTENTIAL FOR MISUSING the results of testing is great. While intended primarily for professional use and for informing parents about the progress of their children, others – including educational professionals, local and provincial politicians, and the media – may unintentionally or willfully misuse the results of the assessments. In the latter case, teachers may see tests as weapons to be used against them [emphasis in original]. (2003, p. 260)

The research participants explored the issue of accountability further when Sam contrasted the difference between decisions made centrally and decisions made in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The research participants linked such decision-making to improved accountability. The example used was the utilization of central office consultants.

> Well if [central office] asked us [whether we] … need the services of an art consultant, we would be telling them whether that was a need and whether we would pay [for the service if we were in a SBM/SBDM milieu]. I think that is what is different. [In a centralized milieu] we are not being asked, at the school level, do you need a language arts consultant? We are being told, "Here is this master teacher … and you [get] six days assigned to you for [professional development], so please use the person." In some schools the whole school year goes by and nobody uses these people and we wonder, "Who are they and what are they doing?" If we were decentralized, I would decide if I needed the services of an art consultant. (Sam)

Ennis added to this by introducing how accountability and evaluation of service is dealt with in the business sector. Ennis highlighted the market driven aspect of SBM/SBDM, which is that principals make the decision whether to use consultants. Ennis pointed out that the market driven aspect is based on demand, there may be some consultants who are in demand and others who are not. Ennis felt that this market driven aspect could be used to assess the quality of service delivered by consultants and as a way to hold them accountable for the quality of that service. Ennis believed that to be consistent with the market driven aspect of SBM/SBDM, schools need to be given the autonomy to select consultants.

> Okay, well what [SBM/SBDM] does is … grant [that] people are better at self-selecting whether or not [they want a] consultant…. Many people know that if nobody calls … [that consultant does] … not get any work and then … [that] position [is lost]. It is much more accountable, [consultants must] rise to the challenge. They [must] work a little harder, maybe [become] a little more sensitive, [and] maybe [as a result] they listen to their clients a little better. (Ennis)

Sam stated that schools become more autonomous because the locus of control regarding the need for consultant services shifts to the schools in SBM/SBDM. The principals' assessment of the need for consultant services determines staffing levels at central office. Ennis contributed to the conversation by introducing the concept of the accountability in a "free market" environment, while Cagney introduced the idea of being autonomous such that schools can be "locally responsive to the context."

> Well just think how sensible [it] … would be if we each had our planning documents and we … all [identified] … a need in literacy, or mathematics…. [Central office] looks at that and says, "We need five math consultants next year to service these …schools, because people are going to be buying a lot of [math] services…." What I liked about that was the fluidity of those positions; that you respond to the needs that exist in the schools. (Sam)

> I think that Sam's point is that you are letting [the] free market work. If there are five math consultants, pretty soon it becomes clear that three are being really effective and the fourth is maybe "on and off" and the fifth is a dud, then the fifth does not receive any call-ups. (Ennis)

> I think that … if we had decentralization in place, it is that we need to be locally responsive to the context. (Cagney)

A move to SBM/SBDM brings with it increasing focus on accountability, autonomy and assessment at the school level because the focus is on what is being done to increase the level of achievement of the students at the school. The staff, students and parents are involved in shared decision-making and an analysis of student results is a key part of determining how to go about making the necessary changes. Increasing the level of student achievement means reviewing instructional methodologies used by staff. The focus on instructional methodologies increases the tension around the issue of professional autonomy and public accountability.

A profession that does not hesitate to establish rubrics for students so that the standards for performance are clear has been more than hesitant to establish rubrics for teacher performance. As Cagney stated: "God forbid that we do that with our own profession." The tension was clearly evident to the research participants and is obvious to the public. This puts principals in a precarious position as they try to rationalize this situation to the public, or try to engage a staff in the examination of assumptions to expand their horizons about the purpose of education, the importance of accountability to ensure public support for education, and the need for transparency, consistency and continuity to earn the requisite trust. The research participants felt that the central focus must be students and student learning. Being accountable for student learning was determined to be crucial by the research participants if education is to maintain the current level of public support, and to regain the support that has been lost.

The conversation about accountability, autonomy and assessment raised the idea that in an SBM/SBDM milieu demand can be used as a method to evaluate the effectiveness of consultant services delivered to schools. Of particular note, however, was the fact that not one of the research participants noted the tension that this same market driven aspect of an SBM/SBDM milieu based on supply and demand was not considered as being an effective way to evaluate teachers or principals.

## The tensions inherent in the role of the principal as instruction leader

At the core of improved student achievement is improved instruction. Improved instruction such that there will be a significant increase in student achievement is a central part of the national debate about the effectiveness of public schools. It is clear that it is of no value to establish high expectations for student achievement if similar expectations are not set for teachers. Principals are a critical part of the school improvement movement. They can no longer simply administer and manage the day-to-day operations of the schools. There is considerable debate, however, as to the role of the principal as an instruction leader who collaborates with teachers to improve instruction and student achievement. "The ideal principal in the 1980s was an instructional leader…. Recent studies from many countries, however, report that school principals **did not actually carry out this role, and conclude that the role may no longer be appropriate for contemporary schools**…." This has resulted in significant tension as a result of "role ambiguity of massive proportions for the school principal" [emphasis added] (Marsh, 1997, p. 127).

Immersed in this debate about the instructional leadership role of the principal is the issue of decision-making authority and responsibility. Ennis spoke to this by stating:

> Some decisions should be made centrally, some should be made by the principals, some by the staff, and some by the teacher. Decentralization means that you always try to get the person closest to the action, the person who is going to take responsibility, making the decision. (Ennis)

Ennis pointed out a benefit of SBM/SBDM by contrasting it to the problem in a centralized decision-making milieu of not being able to "make the decision stick."

> From my administration classes I remember someone saying that for good decision making you need time, decision making skills, information and the authority to make the decision stick. Sometimes we have the time, the knowledge and the skills, but we don't have the authority to make the decision stick. (Ennis)

By contrast Ennis pointed out a tension that might exist as part of the shared decision-making process. The tension consumes the principal's time and takes away from the instructional leadership role.

> But the point is that shared decision-making is tremendously satisfying. Now to make good decisions you need time, and skills and the authority to make it stick and some background knowledge. It is very frustrating, [however because] we have some well meaning parents come to a meeting, … they do not have enough time, … they do not have enough background knowledge, … they really do not have the dialogue skills, they keep interrupting one another, but they do have the authority to make a decision. That is a weakness in site-based decision-making. (Ennis)

It would seem from this that an effective principal must be able to ensure that people participating in the decision-making process possess these skills, have the time and the background knowledge. "Parents must be involved as fully participating and informed partners; and the involvement must come early, be continuous, and be perceived as substantive and respectful" (Lambert, 1995, p. 142). This seems to be consistent with Cagney's position that an effective principal must be more of a facilitator and less of an instructional leader to ensure that the deficiencies identified by Ennis are addressed.

Cagney expanded on Ennis' point by indicating where leaders should be spending their time.

> But balancing [that] weakness in my mind as a school leader… is how do I want to be spending my time? Do I want to be spending a lot of my time lobbying the senior administration of the organization for permission … or the dollars to do [something]? Or would I rather spend the time focusing within my school and discussing and negotiating what is best for our school community in light of the system's objectives. (Cagney)

In a centralized milieu the principal needs to be an effective "lobbyist." This is not a skill that is perceived to be as important in a SBM/SBDM milieu as the principal possesses decision-making authority. But Cagney pointed out that in an SBM/SBDM milieu an effective principal must be a skilled "negotiator." Cagney went on to state that in an SBM/SBDM milieu "wonderful ideas" move forward because people are able to "legitimately… influence decisions."

> I would say that I would prefer to be focusing my efforts and energy in that way, because in my mind that is … leadership. I find myself being … a lobbyist as opposed to a leader and there are lots of wonderful ideas out there. I think that people are much more interested in being involved … when they think that they are legitimately able to influence decisions. If they think that the decisions are really being made somewhere else, [then] … this is [just] lip service, or … contrived collegiality. (Cagney)

As the conversation evolved Sam raised a fundamental question:

> So what kept going on in my mind is "Why?" Why do you do it? And that does link to effectiveness because the "Why", in my mind, should be because of student outcomes. If the outcomes are learning ones, and that is what we are

> accountable for, then it seems to me you only create change in a structure, in a function, in a process, if that is going to help you get at what your goals and objectives are. (Sam)

The question "Why?" struck at the central reason for school improvement initiatives. To address the issue raised by the question why, the research participants focused on student learning and engaged in a further conversation about the role of the principal as an instructional leader. As the conversation evolved Cagney stimulated the discussion by stating that the principal was not an instructional leader but a facilitator.

> I heard you use the … word facilitate. I think there was some debate or discussion around this table because … Cagney [said the principal] was … not an instructional leader…. Then the question became … is it your job as an effective leader to be a facilitator…? (Terry)

> You can't come in and say… okay guys… I want to see more collegiality; I have had enough of this stuffy atmosphere here…. It just doesn't work that way…. What you soon realize [is that] it is the grassroots themselves who are going to get whatever happens [going]. You might motivate them, you might plant seeds, but it has got to come from their examination of their culture…. They also have to want to move in a different direction. (Sam)

> The words and the actions have to match. You have to be able to walk the walk, in a large part of what you want people to be able to do. Now, that does not necessarily mean that I have to go into a grade one classroom and teach them all a lesson, but it does mean I have to model learning. If I make a commitment to do something … I have to be able to accomplish that, and I have to be trustworthy, reliable and all those other good things…. I go back to my old mentor [who said]… "If you do the things necessary to keep your staff going, to keep them happy, they will make sure the kids are happy." If kids go home happy, my goodness parents are a lot more satisfied with what is going on in the school. (Bailey)

The idea that the principal does not have to be the instructional leader but has to be able to "model learning" seemed to need more exploration. In an effort to reflect further on that issue I posed a question regarding school climate and the social issues that schools face.

> Ennis talked about working a lot on climate and social issues. Is the effective leader, in an effective school, the person who deals with instruction or the person who sets up a situation that allows others … to do those things? Is … that contributing to …[an] effective school? (Terry)

> The principal does not have to be a brilliant instructional leader … if you have a reading expert and a math expert [on staff]. It might actually be a good thing to nurture their leadership skills and let them lead those charges. So, do you create a community of leaders? To me that is effective leadership. (Ennis)

> I really see myself as a facilitator, [it is my responsibility] to empower the people to do the job as a staff…. If anyone comes along and says I should be the curriculum expert at nine different grade levels; I am sorry because I am not. But the teachers at each particular grade level will be. (Cagney)

A number of articles read by the research participants supported the position put forward by Cagney and Ennis. The statement made in one such article best summed up the point being made:

> Principals aren't able to know everything that is taught in every classroom and every grade, but they need a firm grasp of the curriculum and the grade-level objectives for each subject. Principals must have a good understanding of the developmental stages of children and how to create an environment that is developmentally appropriate. They must know how to lead their teachers to effectively implement appropriate instructional strategies (NAESP, 2002, p. 32).

As the conversation evolved Cagney proposed that there is no one right way to demonstrate effective leadership. This position surfaced the tension surrounding the debate about whether the principal can be an instructional leader. Evans and Acheson viewed instructional leadership "as an impossible task for principals." The position put forward was that "instructional leadership belongs to teachers, the district's specialists, or outside consultants" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 254).

> There is more than one right way and best way to be [a leader]. There is more than one way to get results. I keep coming back to structure and purpose. That is also part of that leadership piece. What is it we want to achieve? What philosophical underpinnings do we have [or] need? Philosophically if we cannot

> buy into the whole notion of trusting the local decision maker to make the right decision than we don't go there.... I think of it more like mountain climbing. There are many different ways to the top. (Cagney)

> But if you take a look at, what I am going to say is the ambiguity, of many situations in our system. Whether you are decentralized or centralized, hopefully you are continually
>
> on a growth path and I think one of the things that we sometimes do not do well is teach people [how] to accommodate change.... (Bailey)

Trust in the local decision makers and the ability to assist people to accommodate change were seen by the research participants as important leadership practices. This conversation immersed the research participants in a further exploration of the challenges faced by principals that detract from their role as instructional leaders. Cagney pointed out that social issues dominate local and provincial educational discussions to the detriment of instructional leadership.

> I'm just thinking about an idea around leadership again in terms of actions following thoughts. We talk about being instructional leaders, and we talk about instruction and we talk about learning. But, if you analyse what we spend our time talking about as leaders, it is not about that stuff. That is one of the pieces that I find a little bit confounding when we talk about educational leadership; whether it be in our organization or our province, we are talking about ... social issues, quite huge issues, rather than focusing on instruction and then focusing on learning. We are focusing our attention on things that we may not have a lot of expertise in, rather than what we do have some expertise in. (Cagney)

Bailey connected to this statement by noting that the role of the principal and the teacher has changed significantly over the years. There has been a significant increase in responsibilities, many of them non-educational, "a caring principal is an advocate for the students who arrive at school with so many barriers in their personal lives that learning is virtually impossible.... Effective school leaders will seek help from the community to coordinate health and social services with local providers" (NAESP, 2002, p. 75).

Michael Tymchak indicated that the role of the principal is evolving and that the "new role is nothing less than coordinating the full range of human services available to children and youth." Such coordination "calls for an understanding of a wide range of professional and community-based services, power-sharing, negotiation and mediation skills, sophisticated interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to multi-task and create a collaborative team-work environment" (2001, p. 75).

Social issues make the job of educators more complex, which increases the tension with accountability. Immersed within this conversation is also the tension associated with the belief that schools are solely educational institutions and the principal only needs to be an instructional leader. Serious tension exists within the profession as more and more responsibilities are placed on schools to be community centres through which a multitude of services are coordinated and dispensed. Increasingly the role of the principal is viewed as a coordinator and facilitator.

Sam reflected on how communities increasingly are more complex and as such increases the facilitator role of the principal. In that reflection Sam identified the struggle principals have in anticipating what might happen next and how this has increased the complexity of the job. This reflection on the complexity of the community resulted in Sam identifying behaviours principals must exhibit to be effective.

> Now maybe schools are quite different from community to community but I no longer find in our organization, no matter who you talk to, they talk about lack of predictability, [the lack of the] ability to foreshadow, [the] difficulty … anticipating what is going to come up, [and] what is going to happen [next]. We have competing demands, unexpected things happen and you are dealing with certain problems that have to be solved, certain conflicts [and] disciplinary matters, [and] there are a lot of legal matters. Now it seems that you have to be responsive, you have to be flexible, adaptable, and you [have to] facilitate. (Sam)

Sam identified responsiveness, flexibility and adaptability as leadership behaviors of effective principals. The identified leadership behaviors support Cagney's statement that a principal must be a facilitator to be effective. At the core of being an effective facilitator is the ability to develop effective relationships such that others take on the instructional leadership role. Building leadership capacity in schools increases the ability of the staff to deal with the complexities that exists.

> You know … capacity building ties into what I think began as a conversation around tolerance and ambiguity, tolerance ... in a context of diversity. As a leader you have to be able to function competently whether you are at [an inner city school or a suburban school]. You have to have the capability to make that transition in a way that honours the culture that you are working in…. As leaders we capacity build, but within our organizations we also have to capacity build our leaders. To help them become better at being who they are, better [able] to cope with the complexity of the world in which we work. (Cagney)

The research participants felt that effective leaders build leadership capacity within schools. The research participants determined that no one person possesses all the requisite leadership skills, but a group within a school possesses a significant repertoire of such skills. This is consistent with the position that "there is simply no way a principal alone can perform all the complex tasks of a school. Responsibility must be distributed, and people must understand the values behind various tasks" (NAESP, 2002, p. 3). An effective leader therefore capitalizes on this situation by enhancing these skills by increasing the leadership capacity of all members of the staff.

> I think that the answer might be, effectiveness is knowing that I can delegate … building relationships to somebody else on the staff…. Building leadership capacity on my staff is [effective] leadership. (Terry)

> In fact, exercising your limited skills in relating to others might be counter-productive if somebody on staff is already doing it…. When I… [was assigned to a school], one of the

> staff had incredible links to government and various agencies. For me to begin to nurture those … [relationships] would have been foolish; she already had it in the bag. Run with your strengths [is what we need to do]. (Ennis)

The tension associated with role ambiguity is significant for principals. There is research that identified the contradiction associated with the instructional leadership role of principals. Such research concluded that principals "did not actually carry out" the role and such a role "may no longer be appropriate for contemporary schools." Significant tension is created when principals continue to be identified as instructional leaders, but their experience is that the vast majority of their time is taken up with non-instructional or non-educational issues. The role ambiguity issue is exacerbated further when provincial reports envision principals "coordinating the full range of human services available to children and youth" to address social issues. A clear contradiction exists when principals rarely experience engagement in instructional leadership activities, but an enormous amount of their time is taken up with facilitation activities.

### The aporias of leadership in SBM/SBDM

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Gallagher used the concept of *aporia* to help interpretation and understanding to emerge. In philosophical terms an *aporia* is doubtful matter or a perplexing difficulty. *Aporia* is a Greek term that means a state of being at a loss or something that is impassable. For the research participants the tensions that emerged were directly related to the "doubtful matter" that exists in the current educational environment and that creates a significant "state of being at a loss." The research participants experienced too many contradictory situations to believe that what was being said actually matched what was being experienced. This tension made it difficult for the research participants to interpret and understand effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu, but also those in the traditional centralized educational environment.

In the book *Action Research as a Living Practice*, Smits dealt with a number of *aporias* in the chapter *Living Within the Space of Practice: Action Research Inspired by Hermeneutics*. As an example, Smit's combination of theory/practice and ethics was something the research participants struggled with throughout the conversations. The research participants felt that the prevailing belief is that principals are required to understand the theory being proposed by the province or school division and to put it into practice in the schools (e.g., constructivism, School $^{Plus}$). The research participants determined that there often exists considerable evidence that a province or a school division did not or could not put in place the structures and functions needed to support the effective implementation of a particular theory. The absence of these supports created significant ethical issues and tensions for principals.

An example of such a tension exists with the *aporia* of reproduction. The *aporia* of reproduction is used to address the difficulties that exist between methodology and the issues of validity and truth. Leaders in school divisions often seek common understanding about methodology so that principals and teachers can integrate these for the benefit of students. In *Truth and Method* (1975/1989) Gadamer pointed out that no matter how diligently a method is applied there could be no guarantee that truth will emerge. So the "truth" associated with a decade of work to implement "constructivism" into the classroom is that there is no common understanding and as such little to show for the considerable effort put forward. Is that the fault of the teachers and the principals or the province and the school divisions? Or is it more a matter that there was not a clear understanding of what supports and functions needed to be put in place to ensure the effective implementation of the provincial initiative? For the research participants it seemed to be more a matter of the truth behind the intent. The truth seemed to indicate that there was no real intent to "change" so that the initiative could be implemented effectively.

From a hermeneutic perspective there was an absence, intended or otherwise, of responsibility to bridge understanding of the familiar and the unfamiliar. The beliefs or prejudices of those in or associated with education did not change such that new understandings could emerge and be applied. Gadamer said that the prejudices that people bring are "the horizons of a particular present" (as cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 272). Ricoeur felt that present horizons are oriented to certain preferences. The research participants felt that there were many examples of individuals within the current power structures not wanting to alter their preferred way of operating. As such, significant tension is created because there exists an incompatibility. That incompatibility exists within the context of what is said, the intent of the educational reform, and what is actually put in place to support it. As the research participants reflected on effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu they identified what needed to change and what needed to be put in place to support SBM/SBDM.

## The tension of the researcher as interpreter

Gadamer stated, “language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement takes place between two people” (1989, p. 384). He believed the hermeneutic challenge is to arrive at a “proper understanding about the subject matter.” Through conversation the research participants tried to come to an understanding of what each member was saying about effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu. The text of these conversations remains as an enduring expression of the perceived world of the principal. The text is now, however, only understood through the interpreter. “Only through him [sic] are the written marks changed back into meaning” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 387). My challenge is to interpret the meanings that emerged as the conversations evolved. Interpreting the meanings such that there is a “fusion of horizons” where the interpreter’s horizons, the possibility of meaning, and the text come together (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 388). Ricoeur stated that hermeneutics when applied to text “opens up new possibilities of being” in this instance the new possibilities of being effective educational leaders in a SBM/SBDM milieu (as cited in Robinson, 1995, p. 2). Ricoeur went on to state that new meaning is generated in the “flux between the reader and text” (as cited in Robinson, 1995, p. 4). My challenge is to see if the research participants opened up “new possibilities of being” effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

# Chapter 5

## Participants' Meanings of Effective Leadership Practices for Principals in an SBM/SBDM Milieu

Chapter four consisted of the research participants' identification of the tensions with the meanings associated with effective leadership practices, and the relevance of these tensions and practices to the work of principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The research participants arrived at these meanings by collaborating together as leadership researchers whose interest was the identification of effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM educational milieu. Engaging in a research conversation about effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu was an attempt to broaden our horizons by exploring the possibilities of effective leadership practice in such a milieu. The research participants tried to distance themselves from the daily work of educational leadership and position the research such that it was immersed in the theoretical practice of leadership. Such a conversation, which often reflected upon the day-to-day realities of principals, facilitated the emergence of questions about effective leadership and school improvement, which is where the focus begins and to which the conversation always returned. While remaining "open to the possibilities," the research participants concentrated on their "sayings" (Michelfelder, 1989) about leadership practice in such a manner as to allow the participants to interpret these "sayings" to better understand the relationship between the theories related to effective leadership and the practice of effective school leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

In this chapter I am guided by Gadamer's (1975/1989) understanding of the function of hermeneutic reflection discussed in Chapter Three. Hermeneutic reflection is the approach used to broaden and deepen understanding through a constant stream of self-reflection as a result of the framing of the question, the review of the literature on leadership, the conversations of the research participants, and the emergence of participants' meanings of effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Through hermeneutic reflection we are enabled to become more aware of what is problematic in our pre-understandings and, by reflecting on what is concealed in our every-day thinking and acting, we are able to renew and possibly alter our pre-understandings. Hermeneutic reflection does not provide final answers to given questions and may even cause more questions to emerge. It is more a matter of positioning those interested in the questions in such a way that their understanding comes from a different and deeper point-of-view, which may leave them open to further questioning.

I reflect on the meanings research participants gave individually and as a group to effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu by revisiting the themes that emerged, were interpreted and discussed in chapter four. I also reflect on the complexities associated with the various meanings and the implications for educational leadership in this milieu. To do this I reflect on the content of the conversations in order to understand more deeply the meaning of effective leadership practice and its relationship to SBM/SBDM. I also cogitate on the language and practices that emerged from the conversations in order to highlight the limitations of language in speaking about effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

The tension with the mystique surrounding professionalism

A crucial theme that emerged during the discussions was the mystique that surrounds professionalism. Bailey raised the tension linked with the "mystique" surrounding professionalism and, by extension, the mystique associated with effective leadership.

> One of the things that educators have done … in their zest to become professionals … they've built up an aura, [a] mystique around what they do and how they do it, that is beginning to get us into trouble because people want to know; they want us to be transparent. (Bailey)

This statement identified a tension within the research participants and a tension that creates significant anxiety in public education. That tension and associated anxiety is immersed in the issues surrounding the demystification of professionalism and the challenges associated with the structures of power. At the core of this tension and anxiety is the question: "How to go about demystifying the educational and leadership function while at the same time not denigrating the professionalism of teachers and principals?" A second question is: "How to ensure professionals that they will not lose power by including others in the decision-making process?" In an SBM/SBDM milieu the answers to these questions are crucial. The public is demanding more transparency in educational and leadership decision-making. They are demanding that the decision making process be more inclusive and that the barriers to power be removed. Some professional educational organizations and some of their members are opposed to including students, parents and community members in the decision-making process. Sergiovanni (1991) indicated that

> when control is threatened or reduced, the net effect for teachers is not only less job satisfaction but also a loss of meaning in work that can result in job indifference and even alienation. Change efforts that do not involve teachers and changes that threaten to lessen their control over teaching, learning, and other aspects of schooling can have serious consequences for school effectiveness. (p. 261)

For principals and teachers the resistance seems to centre on the perception that professionals will lose power but be held solely responsible and accountable for results.

In a study of modern institutions Foucault (1972) concluded "that there is an intimate relation between the systems of knowledge ('discourses') by which people arrange their lives and the techniques and practices through which social control and domination are exercised" (as cited in Stringer, 1996, p. 151). Stringer went on to point out that from a Foucauldian perspective this professional mystique allows an "elite" to define "the language and the discourse" that "builds a framework of meaning" (p. 151). Members in professional organizations exert their power and control by the attestation of scientific knowledge, authoritative sanctions, and administrative procedures and regulations. The challenge for an effective leader in an SBM/SBDM milieu, therefore, is to immerse people in a dialogue, a "reflection on practice," about power, power relationships, structures of control and domination, and the language of power. As an example the language of power, Lambert and Gardner (1993) found that "reductionist" and "transformative" language was immersed in statements of power and in the words routinely used.

> By "reductionist," [the authors] mean language that carries assumptions that are mechanistic, static, exclusive, hierarchical, manipulative, directional, and/or predictable. "Transformative" or constructivist language tends to imply assumptions that are dynamic, engaging, inclusive, participatory, open, reciprocal, and/or unpredictable. For instance, reductionist words might include such common words or phrases as *impact, mechanism, objectives, alignment, deal with,* and *getting results through people*. When replaced by *influence, approaches, outcomes, integration, work with,* and *working with people*, the same ideas become transformative in nature [italics in original]. (as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 119)

In chapter four statements of power contained in words routinely used were reductionist words intended to ensure alignment, mechanistic objectives and getting results through people as opposed to working with people. Seen this way "exercises of power… are designed to influence the *actions*… of the persons they are addressed to" [italics in original] (Foucault, as cited in Ransom, 1997, p. 123). The purpose of such a dialogue is to attain a clearer and deeper understanding of power and power relationships, and how professionals gain power as opposed to lose power by being more inclusive. Stringer (1996) stated: "From a postmodern perspective, attempts to order people's lives on the basis of scientific knowledge largely constitutes an exercise in power" (p. 150). Sewall noted, however, that "interestingly, there is no loss of either power or authority associated with the empowerment of principals and teachers" and by extension students, parents and members of the school community (1999, p. 63). Patterson (1993) asserted "leaders don't lose power by opening up the organization. The power resides in the organization being driven by values rather than by events" (p. 20). Sergiovanni viewed sharing power as an investment in a school community: "Sharing power is a form of investment that provides more power for everyone in the end" (2000, p. 134). Therefore, an SBM/SBDM school gets its strength, integrity and credibility from the sharing of power and the diversity of the voices included in the power structures. "The power of diversity must be a value conveyed throughout the organization by the evidence that dissident voices make a difference in how decisions get made" (Patterson, 1993, p. 29). To be an effective leader in an SBM/SBDM milieu, therefore, principals must

> build upon the open qualities of human discourse, and thereby intervene in the way knowledge is constituted at the particular sites where a localized power-discourse prevails…. People should cultivate and enhance planning and decision making at the local level, resisting techniques and practices that are oppressive in one way or another. (Foucault, as cited in Stringer, 1996, p. 152)

By being open and accountable, professionals can enhance the understanding of power relationships by engaging people in a dialogue about the sharing of power and effective decision-making. However, professionals must be willing to eliminate the mystique associated with professionalism and those included in the decision-making process must be supportive and understanding. They need to understand that change takes time, requires resources and might result in some setbacks as the transition occurs. The ultimate goal is to achieve a satisfactory balancing of professional autonomy, professional responsibility, public participation and public accountability.

Imbedded in SBM/SBDM and the elimination of the mystique associated with professionalism, is the belief that better decisions can be made at the point closest to the classroom. Sewall (1999) noted that the trend in SBM/SBDM is to ensure that decisions are "made at the site closest to the expenditure and line item need" (p. 26). David indicated that SBM/SBDM "is basically an attempt to transform schools into communities where the appropriate people participate constructively in major decision that affect them" (as cited in Sewall, 1999, p. 105). The research participants came to understand that the rationale behind the demands for transparency and inclusion is trust. A mystique acts as a cloud, a protection for those who see themselves as professionals responsible solely to their professional organization. Others view professional mystique as a barrier through which they are not allowed to pass and that acts as a barrier to power. Professionalism can be understood as something that is only really comprehensible once you are granted membership in the profession. What emerged from the research participants' discussions were two central themes that went to the core of our efforts to gain a deeper understanding of effective leadership practices in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The first focused on the meaning of the word effective and the second focused on trust.

### The mystique associated with the word effective

In trying to deal with the issues surrounding mystique the research participants engaged in numerous conversations about the meaning of the word effective. Cagney's response to the issue of mystique seemed to strike a chord with many of the research participants. The conversation was unsettling and left the impression that the research participants were guarded about this issue and to that point in the conversations were unwilling to surface similar concerns.

> **I'm not sure I know what effectiveness is!** I think the longer I work at this, the more I ask the question, "Am I an effective leader?" Where should I be putting my eggs, in which basket, because there are so many different baskets competing for my time? **I'm not sure I know anymore what it takes to be an effective leader**. Part of that's about the different metaphors that are out there. Part of that is the largeness of the task that we deal with - seventy adults in a building and a thousand plus kids. The complexity of the situation, the fact that a significant amount of our time is spent responding as opposed to [being] proactive and planning. **I'm just not sure about what it means to be effective.** Nobody's

> ever said that, "Goodness, you're an effective administrator." Nobody's ever talked about standards [emphasis added]. (Cagney)

Bailey surfaced the self-doubts that some in the research participants carried as they go about engaging in the practice of leadership. At the core of those self-doubts is the gnawing fear of exposure.

> Most of us would probably be our own worst enemy. One of our biggest fears is someone figuring out what our weaknesses are, and we've got a lot to try to compensate for. (Bailey)
>
> But I would love some feedback, some sincere, honest feedback. (Cagney)

Cagney's statement caused me to reflect again on my reason for wanting to engage in this research project. I wanted to remove the mystique and ascertain what effective leadership practices are, in the hope that they could be quantified so that we can give and receive "sincere, honest feedback" regarding effective leadership practices. Through the course of this research I have come to recognize that what I was looking for was a "techne[24]," identifiable skills that Kouzes and Posner (1987) referred to as an "observable set of practices." Or as Ackerman et al (1996) called it, a "tool box" of skills that need to be mastered for one to be considered an effective leader. Unfortunately the "tool box" I was looking for did not take into consideration the view of "leadership as a process – as learning to be a principal. It is a perpetual process that entails learning to think and act as a leader, in response to the ever-changing challenges of learning and dealing with growing children and the adults who care about them" (Ackerman et al.

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[24] Techne is used as practice and is suitable for instances in which the ends of the activity are well known and unproblematic. In such cases application means deciding the best and most efficient means for reaching the know goal. Carson, T.R. & Sumara, D. (1997). *Action research as a living practice.* New York: Peter Lang.

1996, p. 2). My rationale for a techne re-emerged during the conversations and surfaced the tension associated with the word effective.

### The tension associated with the word effective

Cagney raised the issue of organizational leadership standards, which were referred to later as norms or what I once called standards of competent performance. Bailey pointed out:

> But don't you think you get that? Sure you do; you get it in all kinds of ways but they aren't formalized in the traditional sort of, point A, B, C, [and] D. You know from your sensitivity to other people how they interact with you, the parents, [and] the kids. You also probably have set some pretty high standards for yourself. (Bailey)
>
> I'm speaking, though, from an organizational perspective. What are the norms? I'm unclear; I'm quite certain about parents, … kids and teachers but from an organizational perspective I'm very unclear about what our norms are in terms of leadership. (Cagney)
>
> I don't think we have them. I've always harbored the illusion that if I [were] messing up, I'd know it pretty quick. I'd know that long before I knew I was doing something right. (Bailey)

The point being made was that qualitative feedback from a variety of sources gives leaders an indication of their effectiveness. Qualitative feedback, however, can be problematic in that "perceptions, even if inaccurate in their understanding, are truth to those who hold them" (Bolender, 1997, p. 22). Bolender went on and provided an example of a school community that professed to value "collaboration" but some "perceived the school to have weak leadership because the principal would rarely make an autocratic decision." A community that espouses a belief in collaboration is being problematic if it desires that principals make autocratic decisions. This is only one example of qualitative feedback being problematic.

Ennis expanded upon the issue of quantitative and qualitative feedback by pointing out how effectiveness might be measured. One measure focused on the progress made by students and the other considered the level of satisfaction of clients.

> There are two things that I wanted to say. First of all, effectiveness, in my mind, … should be measured two ways. One is the effectiveness of learning, [which] is what schools are there for. So as difficult as it is to measure learning, and we have all heard arguments of how hard it is, … [measuring] the progress of individual kids from year to year … is effectiveness. That is school effectiveness. Secondly, client satisfaction; "Is your school attracting or is it repelling the people in your neighbourhood?" You can have the greatest program, the greatest teachers but if coffee row has got it in for you, then I would argue that school is not effective. So one is a very market (oriented) approach, which is a reality. (Ennis)

Ennis' point about ways to measure effectiveness went to the heart of the tension associated with how effectiveness is defined and determined. At the core of this issue is the root of the word effective, which is effect. As noted by David Blades, a crucial question then becomes: "What effects could principals have on schools?" (D. W. Blades, personal communication, October 26, 1998). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* noted that effect is derived from the Latin "effectus" (work out) (1986, p. 142). Effect is defined by the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as "accomplishment, fulfilment: the power to bring about a result" (p. 367). A leader is determined to be effective by the accomplishment or the completing of tasks, and the fulfilment of expectations associated with those tasks. Sergiovanni (1991) found that "successful leadership and management within the principalship are directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students" (p. 16). The focus therefore is "to effect" change such that teaching is improved and student achievement increases. In an educational milieu a leader "effects" change by working with people and through their efforts and actions change is effected. The research participants felt that in an SBM/SBDM milieu an effective leader does this by "empowering" people to achieve school improvement goals, which the research participants believed is different than how change is effected in a traditional educational milieu. This belief is consistent with the position put forward by Barth.

> The structure of schools and school systems seems to discourage openness and cooperation. Principals are accountable to parents, the central office, school boards, and the state department of education. The school principal is the agent through which others seek to prevail on teachers to do their bidding. Principals are judged on the basis of how effectively they can muster teachers to the drumbeats of these others, by how well they monitor minimum competency measures, enforce compliance with district wide curricula, account for the expenditure of funds, and implement the various policies of the school board. (1990, p. 27)

Leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu recognize that they are still held accountable for the success of their students. They are able, however, to ensure that those involved in the decision-making process share that responsibility and that success is realized by working collaboratively with others to achieve the agreed upon outcomes. To effect change in an SBM/SBDM milieu, people must be empowered "to try new processes and programs in order to better assure student achievement" (Sewall, 1999, p. 34). Saskin and Egermeier pointed out that "restructuring … involves the evolution of new roles and relationships with the final goal being that of improving employee performance and student achievement" (as cited in Sewall, 1999, p. 48). The research participants believed that most teachers struggle with change, as "change is often frightening" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 251). He went on and pointed out:

> So much is at stake as present circumstances, norms, and ways of operation are threatened. Before most teachers are able to examine the worth of a proposed new idea for improving teaching and learning, they are apt to view this idea selfishly. The first reaction is likely to be, "How will this proposed change affect me?" (p. 257)

The research participants agreed, however, "teachers who feel empowered and involved will generally work to ensure the success of projects, ideas and curriculum" (Sewall, 1999, p. 58). The participants believed that empowered teachers are in a better position to achieve an increase in student achievement than teachers who feel they are powerless. Ennis summed up the feeling by stating: "My point [is that there is] no empowerment without accountability. If you say the word empowerment in the same phrase you have got to put in accountability."

### Letting go of the reins of power

"Traditional schools have not promoted shared leadership with teachers, nor have they involved students in making decisions about their curriculum or in evaluating their own progress" (Lambert, 1995, p. 10). To be effective in an SBM/SBDM milieu, leaders must 'share the reins of power'. Cagney started to articulate this point-of-view by stating, "If you are going to give me the job and responsibilities to make the decisions then I have to have the authority." In turn then, effective leaders must "devolve" that authority and responsibility to others within the school community. "*There needs to be large-scale but carefully crafted devolution of authority, resources and responsibility*" [italics in original] (Lambert, 1995, p. 147). For his part, Patterson pointed out that effective "leaders try to open up their organizations by embracing values such as participation, diversity, and reflection…." (1993, p. 4). He noted that this is based on a belief in the active participation by members of the school community in discussions that lead to decisions that affect them. Ensuring that there is full participation in decision-making does slow down the process. But such a process results in a "diversity of perspectives leading to a deeper understanding of organizational reality and an enriched knowledge base for decision making" (Patterson, 1993, p. 7).

The research partners recognized that student achievement is at the core of school improvement, but they did not agree on how such achievement should be demonstrated. Bailey stated, "One of the outcomes of [SBM/SBDM] is student achievement, [another] is staff satisfaction. Making decisions and seeing them through and getting the recognition when successful … are hugely satisfying features to humans." This belief is supported by NAESP: "Student achievement is at the centre of the national dialogue about the effectiveness – indeed, the viability – of public schools" (2002, p. 1). Sam, however, raised a concern about this point-of-view and its relationship to determining effectiveness. Sam challenged the research participants to consider whether it is the success achieved by students that might be attributed to decisions being made in an SBM/SBDM milieu about the allocation of resources, or the leadership style of the principal that determines effectiveness.

> Is it just that the principal of the school … has more money at that local school level [to] … put into place resources and people … to help… [students] meet their potential? Who would argue with that? Is [the principal] effective as an administrator or a leader? Would we determine that by looking at … kids and how they are meeting their potential? Or would we [determine effectiveness] by watching [the principal's] style of administration and whether [the principal] is

> collaborating and building consensus, and does [the principal] have (an effective school) council…? (Sam)

The research participants determined that effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu instil leadership capacity within the school community to make decisions that result in increased student achievement. Cagney stated, "You know as leaders we build capacity." NAESP asserted a similar position by pointing out that effective leaders instil " leadership capacity into … site councils, giving them authority to be full participants in decisions about policy, budget, programs and instructional improvements. This requires shifting traditional lines of authority" (2002, p. 71). Shifting traditional lines of authority, however, still requires some demonstration of "linear movement" as a result of that shifting. Cagney pointed out that "linear movement" that results in an increased level of student achievement requires different leadership practices than those needed to maintain the status quo.

> Leadership implies movement right, [from] somewhere to somewhere. So we talk about leadership in schools we are talking [about] movement and we are probably talking [about] … goal setting. Once we have decided where it is we are going … you can start to analyze … qualities of leadership you need to get there. The leadership that you need for the maintenance of the status quo versus transition are quite different I would think, and require different characteristics among the leaders. So if leadership is about paradigm change and supporting paradigm change, then it requires us to … go somewhere in a linear kind of way. (Cagney)

Getting linear movement by improving student achievement in an SBM/SBDM milieu is the result of the full participation of the school community in decisions about policy, budget, programs and instructional improvements. Effective leaders not only ensure full participation in the decision-making process, but also the transformation of teachers into instructional leaders within that school community. They do this by getting teachers to "think outside the box" because to improve student learning and to achieve linear movement, requires that teachers utilize more effective instructional strategies.

Transformational leadership: Empowering teachers to be instructional leaders

Reflection on instructional practice is the means by which effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu engage teachers in instructional leadership. By acting as facilitators and coordinators effective leaders empower teachers to become instructional leaders. "Clearly, constructivist leadership is based on facilitative conceptions of power" (Lambert, 1995, p. 100). Cagney pointed out that effective leaders are skilled "negotiators" who plant seeds, cultivate ideas and nurture growth, while at the same time engaging others in an examination of assumptions and culture. Ury (1991) stated, "The same is true of the world of negotiation. Your desired destination is a mutually satisfactory agreement" (p. 10). Effective leaders don't model teaching as a master teacher; they model learning. They are not able to know everything that is taught in every classroom and every grade, but they are able to engage teachers in reflection on practice. Elmore (2000) stated,

> Instructional leadership is the equivalent of the holy grail in educational administration. Most programs that prepare superintendents and principals claim to be in the business of training the next generation of instructional leaders. Most professional development for school administrators at least refers to the central position of instructional. This is mainly just talk. In fact, few administrators of any kind or at any level are directly involved in instruction. (p. 3)

Fullan (1992) stated that school effectiveness research changed the role of the principal from gatekeeper to instructional leader. Barth (1990) and Fullan (1991), viewed implementing change or innovation as the teacher's responsibility. In this context the principal's role is "one of enabling rather than controlling" (Barth, 1990, p. 145). But, with an increasing emphasis in an SBM/SBDM milieu on facilitation and collaboration Leithwood (1992) believed the definition of an effective leader moves from instructional to transformational. Transformational leaders believe "that their staff members as a group could develop better solutions than the principal could alone" (p. 11). Transformational leaders "aim to stimulate … members to think reflectively and critically about their own practices, and to provide appropriate models of the practices and values" (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 183). Leithwood et al. (1999) stated further: "Our transformational leaders demonstrated strong reflective dispositions, which enabled them to learn from experience, a factor that appears to contribute to their success" (p. 179).

Cagney spoke to this point-of view by stating the following:

> I kind of think that as I approach the end of my career … [I] … spend a lot of time afoot. One of the things in terms of leadership that is really striking me is ... I think of myself as a cheerleader [and] a facilitator. My goal is for teachers to grow and continue to grow as educators. My intent is to have them [find] ways to think outside of the box, so that they can build their skills and expand their philosophic perspectives, because that is the only way you can grow learning. (Cagney)

Effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu facilitate and coordinate the focus on student learning by engaging teachers in "reflection on practice" to improve instructional pedagogy. Chion-Kenney (1994) stated that SBM/SBDM focuses on "teacher empowerment, **facilitative leadership**, parent and community involvement, and student engagement… entail a critical rethinking of traditional power structures and allegiances" [emphasis added] (p. 4). Effective leaders do this by posing questions and engaging teachers in conversations about student learning and instructional strategies. This is consistent with the position put forward by NAESP, “We know that if we are going to improve learning, we must also improve teaching. And we must improve the environment in which teaching and learning occur” (2002, p. 1). Ackerman, et al. indicated that effective leaders “embrace open inquiry, the sharing of problems and solutions, and collective responsibility” that “will foster creativity, resourcefulness and collaboration in the work of staff and the learning of children” (1996, p. 3). Burrello and Reitzug (1993) stated that effective leaders orchestrate change by asking questions rather than providing answers. Barth (1990) stated that the leader’s role is that of “the leading learner” (p. 18).

### The importance of interpersonal relationships for transformational leaders

Bailey raised the importance of understanding interpersonal relationships in the human services sector, skills that are of critical importance in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

> We are working with people and in order to work with people I need to understand people, … all their foibles and all of the things that go into [answering the question], "How do I make this person the best person they can be, or help them to be the best person they can be?" Give them the self-esteem, the positiveness, or whatever to enable them to do it. (Bailey)

Understanding people in order to empower them and work with them effectively to achieve the outcomes desired is critical. The research participants felt that there is too much reliance, or even restrictions imposed, by central office administrators regarding human resources and staff development because of employee collective agreements or funding. The research participants felt that in an SBM/SBDM milieu, however, the site administrator must have increased authority and responsibility for human resources and staff development. The importance of staff development was articulated by Barth (1990), "Probably nothing within a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behavior than the personal and professional growth of their teachers" (p. 49). The research participants felt that a core part of an effective human resource function was interpersonal relationships. A similar belief was articulated by the ASEBP:

> Truly effective leaders are most likely people-focused. They are sensitive to the needs of others and genuinely interested in helping them succeed. Often, people-focused leaders have the ability to link situations and the needs of people to the vision or 'big-picture.' Many also have the ability to accurately assess a situation and match it with an appropriate leadership style to bring about the best outcomes. (1999, p. 36)

Effective human resource leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu requires that site administrators immerse themselves in interpersonal relationships so that they can build and maintain effective teams to achieve the goals of school improvement. "Leadership may seem to be evidenced by human relations skills but, in fact, as demonstrated by theorists such as Ouchi, both task and human relations skills are essential to good leadership (as cited in Sewall, 1999, p. 18). That is one of the reasons the research participants felt that it was critical that site administrators be given more authority and responsibility for the selection and development of staff. Leadership implies the building of a team. Patterson pointed out that leading can be defined as "*the process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization….* Influencing implies a relationship among people" [italics in original] (1993, p. 3).

## To be effective SBM/SBDM leaders must be flexible

Effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu must be flexible in order to address interpersonal relationships and to meet the differing points-of-view of a complex society with diverse needs. “The real paradox for leaders is how to balance the needs and demands of students, staff, parents, and school trustees” (ASEBP, 1999, p. 35). To achieve this, effective principals facilitate and coordinate the “sense making” and “meaning making” process. They are not the meaning makers or the sense makers; they facilitate a collaborative process by being the “context setter” whereby others become the meaning and sense makers.

> The leader becomes a context setter, the designer of a learning experience – not an authority figure with solutions. Once the folks at the grassroots realize they own the problem, they also discover that they can help create and own the answer – and they get after it very quickly, very aggressively, and very creatively, with a lot more ideas than the old-style…. (Fullan, 2001, p. 112)

In this way, effective leaders empower others to be the sense makers. To do this Cagney pointed out “collaboration and pure collaboration” assists in the construction of meaning.

Effective leaders help others to clearly define the school’s core function and to construct meaning around that core function. To be effective at this they must be skilled at collaboration, building consensus, conflict resolution and mediation, and possess strong interpersonal skills such that they are able to help build effective relationships within the school community. To achieve this they must possess “excellent facilitation skills” (Patterson, 1993, p. 30). Fullan (2001) stated, “Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups” (p. 5). Lambert viewed “sense making” as constructivist leadership “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling" (1995, p. 29).

Facilitative leadership that assists in the construction of "sense" in a collaborative manner requires strong communication skills. The dialogue that takes place is critical as understanding and interpretation is essential if the process is to be effective. Understanding and interpretation is crucial to building effective relationships. Gadamer (1975/1989) pointed out the significance of language to understanding and interpretation:

> *Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting....* All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language. (p. 389)

Max van Manen noted the significance of conversation and its hermeneutic emphasis "it is oriented to sense-making and interpreting of the notion that drives and stimulates the conversation.... The collaborative quality of the conversation lends itself especially well to the task of reflecting on the themes of the notion or phenomenon under study" (1997, p. 98). Guba and Lincoln stated that conversation is a "hermeneutic dialectic process" through which new meaning emerges as divergent views are compared and contrasted:

> The major purpose of the process is to achieve a higher-level of synthesis, to reach a consensus where possible, to otherwise expose and clarify the different perspectives, and to use these consensual/divergent views to build an agenda for negotiating actions to be taken. (as cited in Stringer, 1996, p. 41)

Effective leaders need to engage people in a "hermeneutic dialectic process." To do this, they must possess a "hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children" (van Manen, 1997, p. 2). They must know and understand hermeneutics because "*a primary role of the constructivist leader is to lead the conversation* [italics in the original] (Lambert, 1995, p. 83). Lambert also made reference to the work of Dewey (1938) and Schon (1987) who pointed out that reflection is immersed in dialogue.

> We often use the term *reflection* to denote the processes that can be activated in the dialogic conversations. When calling forth our own experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about an idea, we are simply remembering or recollecting; when we also assess and re-evaluate the assumptions underlying our remembrances (we stop and think), we are reflecting…. Reflection and self-construction are the central purposes of the dialogic conversation. (as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 86)

In such a dialogic conversation effective leaders carry out their transformational and constructivist leadership by acting as "critical friends" to those involved in the meaning making process. Costa and Kallick stated that a critical friend

> is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. (as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 89)

Sam posed the importance of the analytical skills of an effective leader, pointing out that a critical friend engages people in the analysis, assessment and understanding of information used to inform the decision-making process.

> Maybe part of … effectiveness and leadership is the ability to … analyse, assess, learn about and figure out the situation you are dealing with? Whether it is the needs of the kids, the needs of the parents, the needs of the staff, the needs of the community, and to bring all those together…. [To] facilitate the work of that school…. (Sam)

An effective leader must support a process whereby those involved in decision-making reflect on their own and others' analysis, assessment and understanding. Lambert (1998) stated, "School staff would need to be committed to the central work of self-renewing schools. This work involves reflection, inquiry, conversations and focused action – professional behaviors that are an integral part of daily work" (p. 4). Such work can only be accomplished in a safe and supportive environment in which individuals develop the capacity to challenge their own thinking. Effective leaders must "nurture a reflective environment, one characterized by people suspending premature judgments, making themselves vulnerable through questioning their own and others' thinking, and committing themselves as a group to the belief that through reflective thought *we* indeed will prove to be smarter then *me*" [italics in original] (Patterson, 1993, p. 11).

Empowering people such that they arrive at more appropriate decisions through consensus is imperative in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Collaborative decision-making is key to inclusion, transparency and empowerment. Barth (1990) stated, "Decision making… bonds the decision makers" (p. 34). Ideally a decision arrived at through consensus is "one that everyone supports after openly and extensively considering the many diverse facets of the topic being discussed" (Patterson, 1993, p. 56). To this end site administrators will always struggle to find the time people need to dialogue. As Bailey pointed out "time is the enemy" as there is never enough. But to make better decisions, effective leaders must ensure that people have time to deliberate on important matters.

## The aporias of the word effective in SBM/SBDM

Any conversation that focuses on the meaning of the term effective leadership is fraught with tension because as Smith and Piele (1997) noted, there are "literally hundreds of definitions of *leadership*," and that continued to be a concern of the research participants throughout the conversations [italics in original] (p. 1). Some of those definitions focus on the notion of leading or movement forward, which was Cagney's position. "Other definitions differentiate between management and leadership" (Smith & Piele, 1997, p. 1). The research participants were not so much concerned about the difference between leadership and management, as they were concerned about the impact of increasing the responsibility for management functions in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The research participants, however, always returned to their focus on leadership and as Evans stated, "Despite thousands of empirical studies yielding hundreds of definitions of leadership, there is still no consensus about it" (as cited in Lambert, 2003, p. 4).

A few of the research participants were perplexed by the debate surrounding the words effective and successful. It is clear that there are many definitions of effective and now more complexity is added as authors use terms like "good schools" and "successful schools." Sergiovanni (1991) noted that the terms effective and successful are used interchangeably, which is the position of a number of the research participants. He pointed out that the word effective has both a common and a technical meaning. The common meaning relates to the "ability to produce a desired effect" (p. 76). The technical meaning of the word effective is "a school whose students achieve well in basic skills as measured by achievement tests" (p. 76). It is Sergiovanni's position that the word successful “is meant to communicate a new and broader definition of effectiveness” (p. 76). Trying to determine if effective and successful means the same thing is as challenging as trying to ascertain the practices of effective principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Cagney’s point, however, went to the heart of the issue the research participants faced regardless of the debate about successful and effective: “There is no one right way to demonstrate effective leadership.” But Cagney noted that the critical issue for leaders is trust in an SBM/SBDM milieu, and people buying “into the whole notion of trusting the local decision maker.”

### Trusting the local decision makers

The research participants felt that trust in the local decision-maker emerged as a crucial part of effective leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Lambert (1998) stated that she gives “a great deal of importance to building trusting environments with solid relationships” (p. 79). One reason for this is the concern expressed by Cagney that too many reform agendas have been “ideological and politically” driven from outside of the local school site with no perceived educational benefit for those involved in the educational process. Carlson articulated the political perspective regarding restructuring, reform and SBM/SBDM. He noted that reform is “a broad concept that although called for nationally, occurs in school districts and seems to rise and fall with **political** causes and perceived failings of the public schools” [emphasis added] (as cited in Sewall, 1999, p. 51). The research participants recognized that “it takes a high level of political skill for school leaders to bring about the necessary consensus and commitment to make schools work well for everyone” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 166). It was also felt by the participants that "too little attention" has been paid to the voice of the principal regarding such reforms, but it is left to the principal to effectively implement them. As Barth (1990) noted, "It is unthinkable that any other profession undergoing close scrutiny by so many would find description and analysis of practice, and prescription for improving practice, coming largely from outsiders looking in. Where are the voices of insiders looking in?" (p. 105). It was determined by the research participants that this creates significant tension and results in scepticism and cynicism within education as central office personnel "pressure" principals who in turn pressure teachers to implement change. As Bailey stated

> I think that we need to do a lot of work within our own organization on making the words and the actions match, because the trust level there between staff in schools and Central Office needs a lot of work. That is where I see school-based administrators being able to provide real leadership, but they can't do it if [the level] of trust [is not] there.

This cynicism about words and actions not matching is further exacerbated by the increased use of business discourse to describe the deficiencies of public schools and the requisite remedies. The "market mentality" and "customer satisfaction" discourse seems incongruent with the altruistic goals of public education. Sergiovanni (2000) stated:

> When parents and students become accustomed to being considered customers by a school, the demands they place on the school are not only likely to increase but also to focus on their own private needs and self-interests. This selfish customer mentality erodes commitment to the common good and neglects the cultivation of collective responsibility for that good. What is best for all of the students and for the school become secondary considerations. (p. 65)

It is also not consistent with one of the purposes of public education, that being "to maximize the intellectual and social health of *all* members of society" (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 150). Additionally, "business literature promoted excellence as a way of achieving greater profits, while the educational literature promoted equity as a means of increasing opportunities for those students typically underserved by schools" (Lambert, 1995, p. 14). Some of the research participants felt that there was some incompatibility between business and educational literature that leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu would have to resolve with stakeholders.

The research participants expressed significant concern about the trust in those involved in theoretical writing. There continues to be scepticism because much of the theoretical writing is considered not to be useful in the every day work of schools. Barth (1990) noted, "It is a mistake, I think, to take too seriously the capacity of educational research to directly improve schools. Academics have far greater success reaching other academics than they will probably ever have directly touching school people" (p. 108). Bailey articulated a similar point-of-view by stating: "If I trust whoever is going to be giving me information or making decisions then I can filter that down. If I don't, well people are smart. They are going to see that it is phoney; they are not going to buy into it." Cynicism is also intensified when criticism contained in theoretical writing is perceived to be an attack on public education and educators.

A few of the research participants felt that there was a benefit to applying some corporate sector knowledge, discourse and theoretical writing to the educational milieu. Ennis stated,

> People have higher and higher expectations for satisfaction whether it is doctors, lawyers or schools.... So I think that we need to be saying; "Are you satisfied? Are you getting what you want?" We may not please them all but we need to take that **market mentality** and we need to be able to demonstrate that "Look we

> measure our kids and we see that they are making progress that is appropriate for each individual and as a group" [emphasis added]. (Ennis)

However, concern was expressed that too much corporate sector influence could dramatically alter the goals of public education and the leadership practices of school principals. Bailey pointed out, "When you talk about accountability often times what happens is that you try to turn kids or teachers into math and reading scores." Educational leaders at the school site level face major challenges in balancing corporate and educational discourses in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Expectations are high that decentralized decision-making will ensure that schools are locally responsive to the context of the community and better able to achieve continuous improvement. Decentralized decision-making is viewed as a way to make schools more accountable to their community and a way of removing the excuse that central office personnel are impeding effective decision-making at the school level. However, those demanding that educational leaders become more efficient and effective, and be held accountable for school effectiveness breed scepticism and cynicism amongst educators. They do this by stating that the intent is to empower those at the school site to make decisions they feel are necessary, but then they put restrictions in place that reduce or eliminate flexibility. Sam pointed this out by using an example of how central office staffing formulas can be restrictive:

> I want to be accountable to that community. I want to be able to say that we are developing these kids and bringing their achievements along. But if I am a carbon copy of [every other school in the division] with [the same] staffing formula, [all that says is that] **nobody cares** how many attention deficit and behavior disordered kids I have got, **nobody cares** if I have three teaching associates in one room [to assist] integrated special [needs students]. How do

> you have accountability if [central office does] **not have respect for the differences** among schools? [emphasis added] (Sam)

The research participants felt that simply downloading responsibilities to principals and through the principals to students, teachers, parents and community members without the requisite authority engenders distrust. The lack of time, lack of resources and lack of authority generates scepticism, suspicion and distrust.

The research participants recognized that today's environment demands institutions that are extremely flexible and adaptable. It demands institutions that are responsive to the needs of their students, offers choices of non-standardized services, leads by persuasion, and that give educators and the school community a sense of meaning and control, and even ownership. Competing interests in a complex society that have conflicting expectations engenders distrust because individual or group interests are not seen as reflective of the interests of others. Scarce resources simply exacerbate the situation further because of the competition for those resources can be fierce. The building of consensus collaboratively is critical to developing the trust relationship needed to successfully address the issues and challenges schools face.

Adding significant management tasks as part of SBM/SBDM is perceived to detract from the time needed to work collaboratively to build consensus. Ennis pointed out that, "We get mired in management." Increasing the number of management issues that principals are responsible for in SBM/SBDM does not breed significant confidence amongst principals. Delegating authority and responsibility as part of SBM/SBDM necessitates that principals become skilled at entrusting that authority and responsibility to others. More importantly they must then trust in the judgement of their colleagues, students, parents and community members. Yanitski found that, "Principals who share information, are open, trustworthy, non-judgemental, professionally ethical, and sensitive to multiple stakeholders views are considered to be effective leaders" (1998, p. 15). He went on to cite Hoy and Miskel (1996) as stating that leaders demonstrating such traits are considered to be "transformational" leaders.

### Hierarchical structures and transformational leaders who engender trust

In the current educational structure principals have a hierarchical authority over teachers. In an SBM/SBDM milieu that hierarchical authority still exists but the principal must minimize its use because it will demonstrate that the principal does not trust those involved in the decision-making process. When dealing with parents and other community members such hierarchical authority has no place in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The effective schools research of the 1970s and 1980s, and the parallel effective principals research of the 1980s and 1990s conceptualised the strong and effective leadership that was needed for schools to become effective. Blase et al. (1995) noted that this conceptualisation of effective leadership dominated the 1990s. They found that:

> Effective school principals were predominantly controlling in their relationships with teachers. However, such control was frequently enacted through diplomatic and sometimes subtle means and was compatible with the normative structure of the situations in which principals worked. Descriptions of facilitative-democratic approaches to leadership rarely appeared in the professional literature generated during the 1980s, although effective principals were often described, in comparison with principals in general, as open, collaborative, and quasi-participatory. (p. 6)

In the same research Blase et al. noted that Kreisberg (1992) concluded:

> Implicitly, principal effectiveness was defined in terms of a power-over (i.e., control-oriented) approach to leadership rather than a power-with (i.e., collegial, democratic) approach. However, their approach was not considered offensive or obtrusive because they seldom used harsh authoritarian or overtly controlling practices. (p. 7)

As in all educational mileux, the principal must earn the trust and respect of students, teachers, parents and community members. Reciprocally, students, teachers, parents and community members must earn the trust and respect of the principal. This is crucial because as Lambert stated a "major purpose in schools remains the preparation of children for democratic citizenship. It is not surprising that when we do not offer democratic learning opportunities for children and adults, as we generally do not, we cannot expect democratic actions" (1995, p. 45). However, in an SBM/SBDM milieu the reciprocal trusting relationship is crucial as it is not a 'power-over' relationship but a 'power-with' relationship. Any digression back to power-over will result in SBM/SBDM being viewed as a façade by participants in the decision-making process. As Ennis stated, "I think that public schools have an obligation to be leaders, to have a very political agenda, one of empowerment."

### Transformational leaders help create democratic schools that engender trust

Democratic schools are marked by widespread empowerment in the issues of governance and policy making. The question is, whether more democratic modes of work can exist within an organization that is structurally hierarchical? Chion-Kenney stated that "collaborative work environments… reflect the fundamental ideas of authentic site-based management and shared decision making: collaboration, participation, and inclusion guided by the principles of democracy and democratic educational leadership"

(1994, p. 29). The research participants recognized that to work effectively in a more democratic environment, the principal must avoid the "engineering of consent" toward predetermined decisions. Such actions create an illusion of democracy and result in the loss of trust and respect for the integrity of the principal and in the disintegration of SBM/SBDM. There must be a direct link between the philosophical beliefs and values espoused in SBM/SBDM, and the structures and functions put in place to support it. If they are not there, trust disintegrates.

Currently there seems to exist a systemic distrust of teachers, parents and community members. One reason for this is that teachers, parents and community members do not believe that they have real power to make change. Many feel that the principal, central office or the province will make the final decision or limit their flexibility so that there is no room for alternative decisions. There seems to exist a pervasive lack of trust in the judgement of others. As Cagney noted,

> It seems to me that the underlying thing that we are grappling with is trust. How do you [develop] trust in an organization? Bureaucracies are not trusting [structures]; they are designed to create all kinds of battles because of the distribution of power. How do you shift a bureaucracy to [create a] trusting environment? (Cagney)

Ingrained in this lack of trust is the increased suspicion of the renewed interest in accountability. Evaluation of students and staff is a significant part of accountability. Sarason (1990) provided an example of this lack of trust and the fear associated with being more accountable.

> Too many of us simply don't believe that we really will be allowed to do what we want to do, and that after we spend all of this time coming up with our plans, we will be told that this or that is not possible, or practical, or supportable.... I really did not comprehend the depths of the distrust that teachers have about the

> intentions of administrators…. But there is another factor at work, and that is if they exercised the new power we were giving them and things did not work out well, they would be clobbered. They truly feared the new power we had given them. (p. 64)

As was stated by a research participant in chapter four, if as part of accountability the evaluative feedback is for the individual student or teacher so that they can learn and grow it is viewed positively as being constructive. The same must be true of attempts at reform and an increased level of accountability in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Trust evaporates if evaluative feedback is misused and seen as a “weapon” to be used against schools for the lack of progress of their students, as an example of teachers’ lack of competence, or for the school where an initiative did not achieve the desired result.

When provincial governments establish the ends to be met in the form of what Sergiovanni (2000) called “standardized standards” it limits the flexibility of educators in an SBM/SBDM milieu. There is also the question: Does the standardized standard have universal validity? As Sergiovanni noted:

> But standards are not scientific, fixed, or precise. They are subjective. Some standards are good and some are bad; some are measured properly and some are not. In some cases the rating scheme that evaluates the extent to which a standard is met is set too high. And in other cases it is set too low. Standards are not “scientifically analyzed” to determine if they have universal validity. (2000, p. 79)

When provincial governments put in place provincial assessments to measure these standards as part of accountability, teachers view this with some trepidation and scepticism. They see it as another demonstration of a lack of trust in the teachers’ ability to teach and assess student progress effectively. In an SBM/SBDM milieu it is crucial that principals engage staff and the school community in “reflection on practice” about standards, assessment, professional autonomy and public accountability. The research participants felt that public accountability goes a long way to increasing the level of trust people have for educators. Transparency, continuity and consistency help people gain a deeper understanding of educational pedagogy, the decision-making process, and an increased level of trust and respect for the professional autonomy needed by teachers in some parts of the educational process.

A move to more accountability in a democratic school can be viewed negatively as an infringement on the teacher's professional autonomy. But professionalism can be hegemonic, which intentionally or unintentionally distances and denigrates the non-professional. The professional can view the tension associated with empowering others to be involved in the decision-making process as a lack of trust in the professional. Empowering others to watch, evaluate and guide professionals reinforces the systemic distrust that exists. Authors such as Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Rollow and Sebring (1993), Malen, Ogawa and Krantz (1990), Wohlstetter (1990), Wohlstetter and McCurdy (1991), and Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1993) found that: "Increased accountability to parents and the community at large, along with 'consumer satisfaction' are the central purposes for establishing community control forms" of SBM/SBDM (as cited in Leithwood et al. 1999, p. 13). Empowerment in an SBM/SBDM milieu can be viewed differently, and positively, as an "engagement" or an invitation into a democratic educational decision-making environment so that together those involved in the process come to a deeper understanding and higher level of joint commitment to the goals and outcomes of the school and of public education.

Leadership in a democratic SBM/SBDM milieu is an opportunity to build that level of trust. Focusing on interpreting practice and creating space for alternative democratic leadership engages members of the learning community in the improvement effort. Alternative leadership in the spaces “in-between” helps to produce new meaning and creates deeper understanding (Greene, as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 33). These spaces “in-between” were understood by Vygotsky (1962) as the

> zone of proximal development through which participants negotiate their own meanings, knowledge, and intelligence, influenced by social, cultural, and historical forces. He envisioned these spaces between and among people as being the central arena through which individuals in interaction makes sense of what they think and believe and create new ideas and information. (as cited in Lambert, 1995, p. 33)

Leaders must be able to empower people to fill in the spaces in-between, while at the same time not disempowering others. Leaders must find a balance that satisfies the need for public accountability while at the same time meeting the desire of teachers for professional autonomy. It is an opportunity to develop trusting relationships based on a deeper understanding of educational practice and decision-making that is significantly different from theorizing about the possibilities in the abstract sense followed by the application of a theoretical technique. A trusting relationship can be developed when there is deeper understanding of the circumstances being addressed and a better understanding of the rationale for utilizing the desired techniques. This is based on practice that is imbued with understanding and practice that shows understanding. In such trusting relationships, understanding and therefore application implies ethical choice and action. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated:

> *Praxis* has its roots in the commitment of the practitioner to wise and prudent action in a practical, concrete, historical situation. It is action which is considered and consciously theorized, and which may reflectively inform and transform the theory which informed it. *Praxis* cannot be understood as mere behaviour; it can only be understood in terms of the understandings and commitments which informed it. (p. 190)

In a democratic SBM/SBDM educational milieu, leadership imbued with praxis enables disparate groups of people to work harmoniously and productively together to achieve mutual goals. Participants in such a productive environment take responsibility for the Socratic role of assisting the research participants in its collaborative self-reflection. This is not ridicule from the external but constructive engagement from the internal to achieve the mutually agreed upon goals and outcomes of the school.

## The limitations of language in speaking about effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu

In this last section I focus my reflections on the research participants' meanings and the limitations of language that emerged from the conversations about effective leadership practices in a SBM/SBDM milieu. Of particular note is the binary oppositional language used in some effective leadership literature. There are those who view effective leadership from a technicist approach, or what Barth (1990) called "*list logic*" that "has led to an extraordinary proliferation of lists. Lists of characteristics of the 'effective principal,' the 'effective teacher,' the 'effective school'…." (p. 39). Such lists put an excessive focus on the techniques of leadership, and not enough emphasis on the political, social and moral implications of the leadership act and the social-political role of the principal as a responsible, moral leader. Sergiovanni (1992) found that: "The leadership that counts…is the kind that touches people differently. It taps their emotions, appeals to their values, and responds to their connections with other people. It is a morally based leadership – a form of stewardship" (p. 120). This view is representative of those who see leadership as reflective practice, which redirects attention to the wider political and social contexts in which leadership occurs. The position put forward is that principals must take on the pivotal and political role of engaging members of a learning community in the interpretation, acting and reflection on questions that are central to education and schooling. Both of these languages have their place in the discourse on effective leadership, for effective leadership is as much a technical act as it is political. However, Carson (1991) raised questions that encourage reflection on whether such language deserves a central place in the discourse.

The perceived dominance of these two languages in the discourse about effective leadership and effective schools has been so prevalent that there has been a tendency to take them to be representational of all leadership and ignore their deconstruction to reveal something else that might lay below the surface. As Sergiovanni (1992) stated:

> Technical-rational authority for leadership practice has some similarity to the authority of professionalism (both, for example, rely on expertise), technical-rational authority assumes that the expertness of knowledge itself is primary, and that such knowledge exists apart from the context of teaching: the job of the teacher is simply to apply knowledge to practice, and the teacher is subordinate to the knowledge base of teaching. Professional authority as a basis for leadership assumes that the expertise of teachers is what counts most. (1992, p. 35)

What has been submerged or relegated to the sidelines in the discourse is the language of pedagogy itself; that which has been experienced by practitioners who reside in school communities with students, teachers and parents. Although there are leadership programmes that espouse reflection on practice and the development of reflective practitioners as their goal, their actual and ultimate goal is increasing the effectiveness of leadership in schools. Reflection on practice, on the other hand, carries a goal within it of pedagogical caring and concern for students, teachers and parents. However, as this research has revealed, conditions do exist that constrain this kind of orientation to leadership, and, by implication, may constrain leadership in the pedagogical way leaders function with students, teachers and parents in an SBM/SBDM milieu. "The life of administrators and teachers in schools is often lived at a frantic pace. There is seldom the time for educators to come together [and] reflect on their professional lives…." (Lambert, 1995, p. 131). The constraints emerge in the contradictions between the language and the actual practice of shared decision-making and reflection on practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu.

One such contradiction that emerged in this study is that between accountability and responsibility in practice. Cagney spoke to this contradiction:

> I think that people are much more interested in being involved when they think that they are legitimately able to influence decisions. If they think that the decisions are really being made somewhere else then this is lip service or contrived collegiality. They frankly are too busy to be engaged. I think that is kind of where we are at right now. It isn't believed to be a legitimate collegiality, a legitimate opportunity to influence. (Cagney)

The discourse about effective leadership often speaks about reflective leaders as autonomous and responsible professionals who are guided by a disposition to act professionally and ethically in the interests of students, teachers and parents. This rhetoric, however, has not been accompanied by the freedom and empowerment that enhance such disposition. Cagney pointed that out: "Philosophically if we cannot buy into the whole notion of trusting the local decision maker to make the right decision then we don't go there." Clift, Houston, and Pugach (1990) noted that the extent of constraints and scope of reflective inquiry are complementary concepts; the greater one becomes, the lesser becomes the other. When legislatures and regulatory bodies such as division administration or provincial governments require a specific content or process (e.g., School $^{\text{Plus}}$) and dictate a time frame within which to implement such initiatives, a leader's freedom to act in the best interest of their students, teachers and parents is severely constricted.

The reflective leader is expected to relate to students, teachers, parents, and the broader community in a manner more responsible than a technicist would. The differing views of education, however, have created structures that impede the realization of the broader goals of education envisaged by reflection on practice. Within the expectation about outcomes of schooling the leader can be viewed as a craftsperson moulding students, teachers and parents like clay into predetermined shapes. Within such a structure, the leader's responsibility as a decision-maker constructing defensible decisions is marginalized in a milieu dominated by accountability and the achievement of standardized standards. Pursuit of standardized standards comes to contradict the SBM/SBDM leader's broader aspirations of empowerment of students, teachers, parents, and community members. This is so because they experience an ever-increasing level of difficulty in deviating from set objectives and standardized standards. The belief that the leader's role involves phronesis – the moral disposition to act rightly, truly, prudently and responsively according to individual circumstances in the school – is, for the most part, relegated to the margins of the discourse of leadership.

The contradiction between repressive provincial, divisional or school structures and the maintenance of a reflective stance also emerged in the conversations. While the language about reflection represents it as specific behaviours to be engaged in to promote reflection on practice, the reality of working in the school system contradicts such language. The research participants appeared to be saying; those leaders who wish to reflect in a meaningful way on their practice often encounter a variety of blockages. Bailey, Cagney, Ennis and Sam have each worked in the school division for over two decades, the lack of time seemed to be a major constraint on reflection and time was determined by the research participants to be the enemy. The probable reason for this is that very little or no time at all is officially allocated for such reflection. The daily routine of their work and the increasing demands made on them by a range of increasing responsibilities, reduces the possibilities of leaders engaging in reflective activities such as taking the time to learn from their own experiences, sharing them with others or critically evaluating them. There is little if any free time, as students, teachers and parents and other administrative chores leave no time for collegial discussions and serious thinking about instructional pedagogy or leadership challenges, problems, and dilemmas.

The administrative climate in the division can also play a powerful role in constraining leaders' orientation towards reflection on practice. Cagney pointed out the issues and challenges associated with downloading.

> This is the old paradigm that we have been operating within for years. We keep taking on this work on top [of our current workload]. So the principal is a key person in the organization, their job is to keep growing and growing and growing, because the thinking is that we want to empower these people and give them an

> opportunity to be the decision makers. But I am all of sudden saying that "holey mojoley" I can't do all of this anymore. (Cagney)

Division administration must recognize the positive relationship between reflection and meaningful leadership. They must create working conditions, or allow site-based leaders to create working conditions that promote such deliberation upon practice.

From the foregoing it can be seen that the language about reflection and practice has revealed limitations that have only emerged as a result of reflection on that language. What Gadamer referred to as an “infinity of the unsaid,” implies that no linguistic account is completely univocal as it carries within it possibilities of arriving at unspoken meanings (Bernstein, quoting Gadamer in Wachterhauser, 1986, p. 159). By searching for the implicit and the unsaid in the accounts about effective leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu, the research participants have been able to acquire new understandings relating to this orientation to practice, and the possibility of engaging leaders in transformative leadership by exploring effective leadership practices with principals.

# Chapter 6

## Reflections on a Proposed World of Educational Leadership in a Decentralized Milieu

When I began this study I hoped that I could identify the practices of effective leaders in schools determined to be effective and conclude whether these were applicable in an SBM/SBDM milieu. I felt this was important because as Barth (1990) pointed out the "lack of specific knowledge about the skills that principals need in order to be effective school leaders exists at a time when many principals are facing dramatic changes in their roles" (p. 64). As a superintendent immersed in conversations about the challenges facing leaders in educational mileux that were up until 1995 more centralized than decentralized, I felt the movement to decentralized decision-making seemed to call for "new leadership skills and, indeed, new conceptions of leadership…so that principals may effectively contribute to schools" (Barth, 1990, pp. 66-67). As my research progressed I began to understand Gadamer's assertion that there is a historical nature of understanding itself and its relevance to my research. "Any interpretations of the past… are as much a creature of the interpreter's own time and place as the phenomenon under investigation was of its own period in history. The interpreter is always guided in his [sic] understanding of the past by his [sic] own particular set of prejudices (Vor-urteil)" (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 38).

My prejudices are, and continue to be, immersed in a world of modernity described by Lambert as "bent on precise measurement, analysis, and prediction" (1995, p. 190). At the outset of my research, I believed that the scientific application of reason clearly outlined the path my research should take and the results – the identification of the practices leaders need to be effective in an SBM/SBDM milieu. What I came to realize was that what I was proposing was the creation of a form of discipline that Foucault described as "*programs* of action" [italics in original] (as cited in Ransom, 1997, p. 41). Foucault continued by stating that such programs are "techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities" (1997, p. 41). What I failed to realize initially was that the "objective of a discipline is to create a particular capacity among a group of individuals.... Disciplines work to transmit capacities to subjects in a way that increases their powers (and thus their productivity) without at the same time enhancing their autonomy" (Ranson, 1997, p 31). This realization came to me later in my research, and was both disturbing and unsettling, as it was not my intention to limit autonomy in an SBM/SBDM milieu. This understanding caused me to pause and reconsider my objective and its relevance from a postmodern perspective.

Postmodernism is a theory that provides a distinctively different way of envisioning the social world that enables us to understand the human experience. Modernity provides a perspective of the world that is bound to a scientific vision of the world that is fixed and knowable. Postmodernism questions the nature of social reality and the very processes by which we come to know it. Questioning the nature of educational leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu is central to my study. Elements of postmodernism suggest that knowledge can no longer be accepted as an objective set of testable truths. This is so because the process used to produce the knowledge is inherently "captured" by the features of the social world it hopes to explain. Scientists, as products of particular historical and cultural experiences, formulate explanations of the social world that derive from their own experiences, and hence tend to validate their own perceptual universes. This is exactly the path down which I had embarked.

The original intent of my research seemed to be heading in a direction that would validate my existing horizon of understanding of educational leadership and result in the ordering of principals' lives on the basis of scientific knowledge, which from a postmodern perspective also constitutes an exercise in power. For me what emerged during this reflective time was an understanding that what the intended research seemed to be doing was not just an exploration of method, but an inquiry into the ways in which knowledge is produced and the benefits that accrue to people who control the processes of knowledge production.

I came to understand that the postmodern turn derives much of its power from the way it deconstructs. Deconstruction is the pulling apart for examination the mechanisms of knowledge production. "Post-modernity is a breaking apart of reason" such that it "reveals…that reason has only been one narrative among others in history; a grand narrative, certainly, but one of many, which can now be followed by other narratives" (Raulet, as cited in Kritzman, 1988, p. 34). This realization I found to be exceedingly frustrating because I now understood that my research was no longer possible as originally intended – identify the practices, get principals to learn them and then apply them so that they are effective leaders. What I discovered was that the key features of my modernist world, science and rationality, had themselves become subject to forms of philosophical investigation that raise doubts about many of the taken-for-granted assumptions upon which my understandings of the social and physical world rests.

In particular I found Michel Foucault's (1972) investigation of social life to be exceedingly exasperating because it reinforced the idea that there can be no objective truth. Foucault believed that objective truth does not exist because there is an essential relationship between the ways in which we produce knowledge and the way power is exercised. Foucault is noted for his study of the history and development of modern institutions, schools being just one of them, that resulted in a conclusion that there is an intimate relation between the systems of knowledge, that he called discourses by which people arrange their lives, and the techniques and practices through which social control and domination are exercised in such local contexts. Foucault believed that people are subject to oppression. This I did not want to hear; nor did I want to believe that in public education we oppress people. Foucault went on to point out that we are subject to oppression because of the systems of control and authority we put in place in such institutions and because we comply with the accepted procedures, routines, and practices that regulate our lives.

As I reluctantly continued to reflect upon Foucault's analysis, I realized I had to gain a deeper level of understanding of the micropolitics of power within education and in an SBM/SBDM milieu. That meant I needed to pay significantly more attention to the means by which we are said to subjugate people. Foucault indicated that "codes" and "discourses" are a means that are used to subjugate people as we organize and enact our educational lives. He pointed out that the role of the intellectual, and in my opinion, the researcher, is "to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, [and] to reexamine rules and institutions…." (Foucault, 1988, p. xvi). My reluctance to open myself to Foucault's analysis swirled around the idea that we subjugate or repress people. My reluctance was assuaged somewhat when Boncenne pointed out, in a conversation with Foucault, that "in order to analyze power, one must not link it *a priori* to repression" (as cited in Kritzman, 1988, p. 102). I was also enlightened as I came to realize that "disciplines may make individuals, but not completely or finally. This leaves plenty of room for change and opposition" (Ransom, 1997, p. 46).

Understanding that disciplines may make individuals but that this was not a finite state, and that there is plenty of room for change and opposition helped me to realize the significant role that interpretative communities play in education. Fish (1980) described our social life in terms of "interpretative communities." These interpretative communities consist of producers and consumers of knowledge or "texts." Fish pointed out that individuals and groups in positions of authority, of which I am one, control what we consider to be valid and reliable knowledge, or what we often term professional knowledge about practice. Classroom teachers, principals, superintendents, and trustees are examples of producers of knowledge who exert control on the texts of social life in schools and other educational mileux. We organize classrooms and schools, define the rules and procedures by which educational services will be delivered, and formulate policies that control the boundaries within which particular interpretive communities operate. In this way we exercise power and dominate the way things happen in such educational communities. Through interpretative communities there can be, I believe, a divestiture of any vestiges of subjugation and repression.

I found Foucault's thinking to be vexing, because it portrayed, in my opinion, only the one face of power. That negative face is "power as exploitation and personal dominance," which is consistent with my earlier concern about subjugation and repression. I understood that it did not seem to address the positive face of power by which interpretative communities can create the "visions and collective goals" outlined by McClelland (1975), (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2000, p. 165). Foucault's thinking was unsettling because it caused me to question many of the basic assumptions that I believe form the foundation of my work. But much of that foundation had taken shape in centralized decision-making mileux and only recently had I been immersed in decentralized decision-making milieux. To me that came to mean that I needed to rethink our rigidly defined work practices, hierarchical organizational structures, representation as opposed to participation, isolation as a result of high degrees of specialization, centralized decision-making, and the production of knowledge by experts or what could be termed as organizational elites. The issues of repression, subjugation, exploitation and personal dominance could be dealt with through interpretative communities by working collaboratively and cooperatively to create a positive and productive vision and relevant collective goals. In other words, through this research my reflections on postmodernism caused me to re-examine the ordinary, everyday, taken-for-granted ways in which I organize and carry out my professional activities. In doing so it gave me an opportunity to consider other leadership possibilities.

Principals need support through professional development to acquire the skills associated with effective practice. This is not a new idea. The research participants articulated this need during a number of conversations. The challenge is determining what are the practices needed by principals to be effective a SBM/SBDM milieu. What emerged through the conversations and questioning was how critically important reflection on practice is in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Its importance is best captured by something Barth (1990) said about principals becoming "reflective practitioners, capable of learning as they lead" (p. 67). What was just as important a realization for me was the significance of leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu ensuring that others become reflective practitioners capable of learning collaboratively together as they work to include people in the decision-making process and improve student achievement. Reflective practitioners must exhibit a reflective openness that "starts with the willingness to challenge our own thinking, to recognize that any certainty we ever have is, at best, a hypothesis about the world" (Senge, 1990, p. 277). This is a view of leadership in learning organizations in which "leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for *building organizations* where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for learning" (Senge, 1990, p. 340).

Through the research process I came to understand that many of the leadership practices of effective principals in a centralized decision-making milieu are somewhat similar to the practices of effective principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu. The differences are significant, however, in that there is appreciably more emphasis placed on certain practices and the requisite skills that need to be performed are at a significantly higher level. So I concluded that it is more a matter of degree of emphasis as opposed to a noteworthy contrast. However, that realization is consistent with many of the traditions that currently exist, but is not reflective of other leadership possibilities.

### Leadership contrasted: Centralized and localized decision-making

As my research evolved I came across some management and leadership literature that profiled charismatic, hard charging leaders who mobilized their followers by either their personality, vision or both. These leaders, however, operated in more centralized milieux. Some were charismatic school leaders that were "perceived to exercise power in socially positive ways" (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 57). In many centralized systems "conventional wisdom" indicated that such leaders developed a vision and worked to mould the organization to reflect that vision (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 82). These "effective leaders [had] agendas" and were totally committed to achieving results (p. 82). In these circumstances such leaders had visions that stood-alone and needed "to be sold and bought into" by others (Lambert, 2003, p. 6). Traditional schools in centralized milieux did not generally involve "students in making decisions about their curriculum or in evaluating their own progress. In this sense, traditionalism is at the opposite end of the learning/leading continuum from constructivism…." (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 10).

In contrast effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu ensures that a vision is developed with stakeholders, not for them. One of the responsibilities of a leader in such a milieu is to act as a critical friend and "bring to the surface and challenge prevailing mental models, and to foster more systemic patterns of thinking – leaders are responsible for learning" (Senge, as cited in Leithwood et al. 1999, pp. 75-76). Working collaboratively means participants assist each other to make sense of where they want to go, how they want to get there, and what they will need to know in order to determine whether they have achieved their agreed to outcomes. Leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu work collaboratively with others to produce new meaning.

Producing new meaning is "hermeneutic work [that] is based on a polarity of familiar and strangeness" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 295). Such a collaborative interpretative process is not just the repetition, copying, reproduction, reconstruction, or restoration of the interpreted in its originality. It is rather interpretation that "produces something new" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 128). In an SBM/SBDM milieu there is no need to sell a vision as "people who participate in deciding what and how things will change not only are more likely to support the change but also are actually changed themselves by the mere act of participation" (Boyett & Boyett, 1998, p. 69).

I came to understand that effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu is the relentless commitment to and focus on helping others to develop the shared vision and the associated goals; the development of which occurs collaboratively and not singularly. Effective leadership is also, as Gadamer pointed out, a willingness to risk "one's own preconceptions so that the unfamiliar gets encountered precisely as the unfamiliar" (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 145). To do so means that judgment and preconceptions must be suspended such that there is an opening up of "the interpreted object and the interpreter" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 145). Such a relentless commitment and focus is in direct opposition to some of the examples of duplicity carried out under the guise of decentralized decision-making that were actually more reflective of centralized decision-making. Leithwood et al., (1999) provided one example:

> Typical leaders were often strongly committed to a particular solution prior to entering the "collaborative" problem-solving process and constantly manipulated the process in an effort to gain support for that solution. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, had much less stake in any particular preconceived solution. They wanted the best possible solution the group could produce, and took steps to ensure that such a solution was found. (p. 176)

Entering into collaborative problem solving when committed to a particular solution is duplicity. It is reflective of a model of dependency that is hierarchical. In a hierarchical model of dependency the principal is relied upon to make the major decisions, give and withhold information and permission, and direct the work of the school and its personnel. This form of governance has "more to do with steering [people] in the desired direction without coercion" (Ransom, 1997, p. 29). The goal of both governance and discipline in such circumstances "is to persuade groups of individuals to behave in a certain way without provoking them into thinking critically about what they are being asked to do" (Ransom, 1997, pp. 30-31). In an SBM/SBDM milieu there exists a co-dependency in which all stakeholders rely upon each other to make major decisions together, to share information and the granting of permission, to collaboratively decide on the direction the school will take, and to think critically about what they intend to do and why.

Sergiovanni cited Cawelti (1994) as noting that under the guise of decentralized decision-making there is considerable evidence that little has changed. "While one can point to changes here and there, the more traditional ways of doing things still dominate the scene" (as cited in Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 1). Sergiovanni went on to cite Bimber (1994) as stating:

> The movement toward experimentation with the principle of de-centralization shows every sign of continuing to accelerate. Yet the results so far are not encouraging.... Few schools calling themselves "de-centralized" have made major changes in established educational practice... there is not much variation in the nature of decision-making under different degrees and forms of de-centralization.... Bimber concludes that the primary reason for the limited impact of decentralization is the inability of school districts to deal with the inseparability of decisions. Decisions deal with different subjects, all of which are interdependent. Yet the decision-making structures represent fragmented attempts to deal with one or another issue, but not all of the issues at the same time. (1996, p. 2)

My research found that reflection and transformation are extremely significant practices of effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu. I came to realize that reflective practitioners in an SBM/SBDM milieu must also be transformational leaders who, as Leithwood et al. (1999) pointed out, get people to "think reflectively and critically about their own practices" (p. 183). Gadamer stated "the proper relation to traditions which characterizes educational experience... is a *transformative* relation" [italics in original] (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 95). At the heart of such leadership is the ability to motivate, organize, orient and focus attention on problems and problem solving. "Mobilizing the school community on behalf of problem solving is practicing leadership as a form of pedagogy. When principals practice leadership as pedagogy, they exercise their stewardship responsibilities by committing themselves to building, to serving, to caring for, and to protecting the school and its purposes" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 94).

I came to understand that as a superintendent it is imperative that I ensure that principals are provided with numerous opportunities to engage in conversations about leadership and power so that there are opportunities for reflection and, possibly, transformation. For the most part principals practice their leadership skills in isolation and rarely get opportunities to engage in conversations about effective leadership practice. Engaging in conversations about effective leadership and power sharing means reflection on "strategies of power… the strategies, the networks, the mechanisms, all those techniques by which a decision is accepted and by which that decision could not but be taken in the way it was" (Foucault, 1988, p. 104). Manipulating the situation such that there is no option but to arrive at a particular decision is an exercise of power that is unacceptable in an SBM/SBDM milieu. However, it is a discussion I have heard in many different venues. Grappling with such dilemmas also helped me to answer a question I posed as part of this research. That question was: "Can reflection on practice be an effective method of professional development for educational leaders, and if so, can reflective leadership be implemented within an SBM/SBDM milieu to empower teachers to become instructional leaders?" The answer that emerged for the research participants and me was a resounding "yes."

Sergiovanni (2000) pointed out that it is rare that principals engage in reflective conversations "about the stuff of culture, the essence of values and beliefs, the expression of needs, purposes, and desires of people, and about the sources of deep satisfaction in the form of meaning and significance," which is the "lifeworld of schools and of parents, teachers, and students" (p. 5). Principals need to be given significant opportunities to engage in reflective conversations with their colleagues, staff, students, parents and the broader community. Reflective conversations that result in the appropriation of a "proposed world…. is not *behind* the text, as a hidden intention would be, but *in front of* it, as that which the work unfolds, discovers, reveals" [italics in original] (Ricoeur, as cited in Thompson, 1981/1995, p.143).

Effective leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu also results in teachers taking "major responsibility for building leadership capacity in schools… the role of the principal… is much more complex…. [It] demands a more sophisticated set of skills and understandings… and requires that principals and teachers alike serve as reflective, inquiring practitioners who can sustain real dialogue and can seek outside feedback to assist with self-analysis" (Lambert, 1998, p. 24). This is the higher level of skill referred to earlier which includes finely honed skills in communication, group process facilitation, inquiry, conflict mediation, and dialogue.

Reflection on practice is central to effective leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu. As Gadamer (1975/1989) wrote, "Knowledge which cannot be applied to the concrete situation remains meaningless and even risks obscuring the demands that the situation makes" (p. 279). This articulates the importance of application to all understanding because knowledge that cannot be applied remains meaningless. In Chapter Three, I discussed Gadamer's notion of understanding as application that involves phronesis (ethical know-how) within which there is always a distinctive mediation between universal knowledge and its specific application in particular situations.

Bernstein (1987) expanded upon the importance of reflection by pointing out "the quest for understanding is conditioned and constituted by reflection upon how to act wisely in concrete human situations" (as cited in Kanu, 1993, p. 212). A critical part of effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu is phronesis (ethical know-how) and the ability to reflect on practice so that principals are enabled to act wisely in such an educational environment. There exists a significant distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* as pointed out in Chapter Three, and that understanding involves application. Effective principals in an SBM/SBDM understand application as not technical knowledge but phronesis. Interpretative knowing as praxis (understanding as application) and as a concern for others, other contexts, and other ways of seeing and being in the world. As Gadamer (1975/1989) noted, there must be an inextricable connection of the theoretical and practical in all understanding. That inextricable linkage of the theoretical and practical was something we grappled with in conversation about the issues of power and control, and the meaning of educational leadership occasioned by the movement toward decentralized school leadership.

### Power and control in a decentralized school leadership environment

A move to SBM/SBDM brings with it an increasing focus on power, control, autonomy and accountability at the school level because the focus is on what can be done to increase the level of achievement of the students. In a centralized system there is always the option of pointing out that power and control reside at another location and, accordingly, until leadership at that location brings forward ideas, the noted deficiencies cannot be addressed. As noted in Chapter Two, research during the 1980s continued to dominate concepts of school effectiveness in the 1990s and portrayed principals as strong and effective leaders who "were predominantly controlling in their relationships with teachers" and "facilitative-democratic approaches to leadership rarely appeared in the professional literature" (Blase et al. 1995, p. 6).

My research helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the belief by principals that notions of their "empowerment" can be considered as another method of centralized control, as simply a downloading of increased levels of responsibility and accountability without the delegation of the requisite authority. It is of critical importance, therefore, to establish structures and functions that are exceedingly transparent and demonstrate to principals that power, control, autonomy and accountability reside at the school site. But, with that knowledge comes the correlational understanding that power, control, autonomy and accountability must be shared with students, staff, parents and the broader community. For their part principals must be able to answer the question: How are students, staff, parents and the broader school community going to be active participants in the decision-making process? The answers to that question are crucial to successful decentralized decision-making because as Beane and Apple (1995) pointed out:

> In a democratic school … all of those directly involved in the school, including young people, have the right to participate in the process of decision making. For this reason, democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making. (p. 9)

As a superintendent I now have a better understanding that how I engage principals in the decision-making process and how principals engage their communities in the same process is crucial to the success of SBM/SBDM. Those who are involved in decentralized democratic schools will not agree to participate fully and wholeheartedly in what they perceive to be an SBM/SBDM façade, defined as "a false, superficial, or artificial appearance or effect" (Merriam-Webster, 1994, p. 415). I must work collaboratively with principals to ensure that we all understand that to ensure the success of SBM/SBDM we must start with the classroom. We must acknowledge that "there seems to be no awareness that to alter the power status of teachers and parents, however necessary and desirable (and problematic), without altering power relationships *in the classroom*, is to limit drastically the chances of improving educational outcomes" [italics in original] (Sarason, 1990, p. 5).

Acknowledgement is an important start, but the power structure within the classroom must change in order for SBM/SBDM to be successful. "It is not surprising that when we do not offer democratic learning opportunities for children and adults, as we generally do not, we cannot expect democratic actions" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 45). Barth (1990) pointed out that "decision-making…bonds the decision makers" (p. 34). Engaging students and parents in the decision-making process within the classroom and within the school ensures that there is a greater opportunity for the understanding of the issues and challenges that are faced and the rationale for the decisions being made by the participants. It is no longer a situation where top down decisions are made with little or no understanding of the reasons for the decision. Decisions are made by those closest to the site with a better understanding of the issues and challenges they face or the felt need for the requisite decision. It is a cooperative and collaborative decision-making process that shares power and control, and provides a greater opportunity for understanding, which has the potential of creating a stronger bond that, connects the decision makers. I believe that facilitative leadership is critical if SBM/SBDM is to succeed. Facilitative leadership is one way to ensure there is a sharing of power and control and a greater opportunity for the bonding of decision makers.

### Facilitative leadership in an SBM/SBDM milieu and the sharing of power and control

Facilitative power is defined as "the ability to help others achieve a set of ends that may be shared, negotiated, or complementary with out being either identical or antithetical" (Goldman, Dunlop, & Conley, as cited in Lambert et al., 1995, p. 100). This ability to help others is enacted as facilitative leaders function as managers, coordinators, facilitators, and delegators in an SBM/SBDM milieu. To be effective at these various functions, principals must be able to conceptualize how the individual parts integrate into the whole. All such functions require principals to possess a high level of human-relations skills in an SBM/SBDM milieu. In such a setting they must be able to facilitate group processes, excel in interpersonal communication, and build team spirit, while at the same time affirming the efforts of all those who have committed themselves to the shared goals and objectives of the school. Critical to a principal's effectiveness is the ability to discern the aptitudes, areas of expertise, and interests of teachers, students, parents and community members so that these can be matched to abilities, aptitudes and responsibilities.

The principal must retain sufficient influence to be able to facilitate the coordination of this collaborative effort. Such influence is "different from commanding or bribing compliance in that it involves influencing others by persuasion or example, or by tapping inner moral forces. This influence, however, is typically reciprocal" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 87). Prasch said, "The principal's new role is to find ways to empower all staff members to maximize their contributions in successfully attaining the school's goals. Undoubtedly this requires trust, patience, and a firm belief in the positive outcomes of group involvement" (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 190). Influencing others by persuasion, example, or tapping inner moral forces is central to the facilitative role. An example of its significance was pointed out by Michael Tymchak (2001) in the *Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School: School $^{Plus}$ a Vision for Children and Youth* final report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan. In that report he stated that schools must become community centers through which a wide range of services are delivered to members of the community. The facilitative role of the principal "is nothing less than coordinating the full range of human services available to children and youth" which "calls for an understanding of a wide range of professional and community-based services, power-sharing, negotiation and mediation skills, sophisticated interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to multi-task and create a collaborative team-work environment" (p. 75). Working effectively with a wide range of service delivery groups, agencies and organizations will require that the principal be able to develop mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships with various people. This will be a significant challenge as there are power sharing and control issues within governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In such relationships principals will have to be extremely cognizant that embedded in the language used are "a microcosm of power relations… [that are] a reflection of the macrocosm of power relations in the larger society" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 253). Gadamer noted that the hermeneutical universality of language explains how "extralinguistic factors, such as power relations and the political and economic relations of class, race and gender, have influence over educational experience only through the medium of language" (as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 267). They are power relations only as long as they have influence. Facilitative leadership involves significant levels of collaboration, which is a self-reflective evolving process. Facilitative leadership as a collaborative process needs leaders "who can safeguard the process, facilitate interaction, and patiently deal with high levels of frustration" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 97). Collaboration can be exceedingly frustrating and has been referred to as the "tyranny of consensus" as a result of endless meetings that drag on and seem to achieve little" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 108). But, effective leaders are able to use language appropriately and work collaboratively to get results by ensuring that all tasks are coordinated and consciously performed, and that the microcosms of power relations are productively addressed.

The microcosms of power relations are productively addressed, in my opinion, through facilitative leadership, which is a hermeneutic process and experience. I believe it is truly "woven completely and utterly into the general being of human praxis" (Gadamer, as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 328). Facilitative leadership shares power with those involved in the collaborative process. "Sharing power is a form of investment that provides more power for everyone in the end" (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 134). The collaborative process is, in effect, local hermeneutics that "begins at specific interpretational sites," the local school for example, "and takes its bearing from the local hermeneutical conditions rather than a set of universal prescriptives" (Gallagher, 1992,

p. 342). Together the school community determines the rules as "phronesis enables [them] to work out the rules in and for the local interpretation"(Gallagher, 1992, p. 342) and using Gadamer's concept of application "the universal gets determined by the particular" (as cited in Gallager, 1992, p. 342). It is important to ensure that phronesis does not get reduced to a form of techne. In an SBM/SBDM milieu "*techne* should be actually practiced under the guidance of *phronesis*" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 186).

Weiss and Cambone (2000) claimed that SBM/SBDM "is a reform of significant proportions, altering as it does the balance of power in schools" (p. 366). Facilitative leadership focuses on ensuring that reflection on practice fosters self-renewal. Self-renewing schools thrive with leaders who "enhance the collective ability of a school to adapt, solve problems, and improve performance," which is the definition of facilitative leadership used by David T. Conley and Paul Goldman (as cited in Smith & Piele, 1996, p. 5). Effective facilitative leaders are able to channel stakeholders' efforts and energy toward the achievement of their common goals and engage in reflection on practice to establish a supportive and safe environment such that there is a readiness for change. A leader in an SBM/SBDM milieu is the "context setter, the designer of a learning experience – not an authority figure with solutions. Once…[people] at the grassroots realize they own the problem, they also discover that they can help create and own the answer" (Fullan, 2001, p. 112). Such power sharing in an SBM/SBDM milieu, is an example of "power relations that are productive and efficient [and] cannot be based on… coercion. The individuals involved must truly decide to enter… a particular power relation… participants do not lose their capacity for reasoned choice or refusal…."

(Ransom, 1997, p. 126). Participants must feel that the power relationship is mutually beneficial and reciprocal.

### The complexities of sharing power and decentralized control

There are, however, numerous complexities inherent in the sharing of power and control in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Of particular significance is that "individuals bring past experiences and beliefs, as well as their cultural histories and world views, into the process of learning; all of these influence how [they] interact with and interpret [their] encounters with new ideas and events" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. xi). Gadamer pointed out that historical consciousness can be limiting if people remain within their own historical horizon. "The task of historical understanding…involves acquiring the particular historical horizon, so that what we are seeking to understand can be seen in its true dimensions" (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 270). When principals engage stakeholders in conversations they work to ensure that everyone discovers "the standpoint and horizon of the other person, his [sic] ideas become intelligible," without the necessity of everyone "having to agree with him [sic], the person who thinks historically comes to understand the meaning of what has been handed down, without necessarily agreeing with it, or seeing himself [sic] in it" (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 270).

Discovering the standpoint and horizon of the other person is not a simple task. Foucault (1980) raised my awareness of the significance of this challenge as he explained the subscription to professional knowledge that can hide the nostalgia for power by intellectual domination. In working with principals it is imperative that educational leaders in SBM/SBDM milieux are diligent in their efforts to ensure there is a genuine hearing of the diverse voices of the school community. What is needed is the elimination of any attempt at the reification of professional knowledge as it limits the freedom of thinking about power sharing and control. We cannot continue to maintain, for example, that only those who immersed themselves in the disciplines of educational administration or curriculum studies have the professional knowledge needed to participate in the decision-making process. We must give due consideration to Foucault's belief that disciplinary power "manufactures" and can "*normalize*" people [italics in original] (as cited in Ransom, 1997, pp. 16-17). Disciplines manufacture people by cultivating ideas contained within a discipline and then inculcating qualities and traits into an individual that did not exist prior to immersion into that particular discipline. They normalize by guiding individuals to optimize performance relative to a particular norm, which is a "constraint of a conformity that must be achieved" (Foucault, as cited in Ransom, 1997, p. 17). Effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu is not being constrained to conform but opening up possibility. Our professional knowledge can be a constraint and we must be open to other possibilities.

Cagney pointed out some of the other possibilities that exist by noting the significant diversity that exists within communities and that this diversity contributes to a multiplicity of meanings. A multiplicity of meanings makes it more difficult for principals to develop consensus on the sharing of power and control, and the development of consensus on school improvement initiatives. To be constrained by professional knowledge and not open to the possible, will only make the principal's task more difficult. To be effective in an SBM/SBDM milieu principals will need a higher level of communication, listening, consensus building and interpersonal skills. "Determining the specific character of the diverse wills to power in individuals, as well as the balance of power among them, is crucial…." (Ransom, 1997, p. 7). Clearly, a principal's listening skills will be crucial.

To be an effective leader in an SBM/SBDM milieu principals must address the challenge articulated by Cagney, "to look at differentiating what we do in response to our community" because schools need to be "locally responsive to context." Being locally responsive to context enables principals to participate in the determination of "the direction and shape of the next truth," which was "Foucault's highest aspiration" (Ransom, 1997, p. 58). Principals must ensure that they have a deep understanding of the significance of the complexity inherent in the resistance to change they will face, and the perceived loss of power and control that some of their colleagues may be concerned about. Lambert et al. (1995) said, "Schools … are among the more hierarchical of organization…. Hierarchy and roles establish and maintain authoritative power, that is, power and control over the decisions and behaviors of others" (p. 99). Engaging others in the sense making process will begin to address the issue of power and domination and will immerse people in a process that should result in increased power and control as opposed to the loss of power and control. "The relations of power are perhaps among the best hidden things in the social body. A decisive first step in confronting and perhaps changing power relations is simply to reveal them and their mode of operation" (Foucault, as cited in Ransom, 1997, p. 94). This confrontation of power can result in a justification "for the exercise of power [that] are shown to exist, [and a] simultaneous emergence of rational restrictions on power" (Ransom, 1997, p. 12).

To be effective at dealing with the complexities associated with the sharing of power principals must be skilled at collaboration, building consensus, and conflict resolution and mediation. As well, they must possess a high level of interpersonal skills such that they are able to help build effective relationships with the school community. As Patterson noted (1993) to be successful at building effective relationships with the school community principals must possess "excellent facilitation skills" (p. 30). Principals in an SBM/SBDM milieu learn very quickly that in dealing with these complexities trust emerges as an absolute necessity if everyone is to work cooperatively together in a productive and respectful manner.

### The centrality of trust in the sharing of power and control in an SBM/SBDM milieu

Trust in the local decision makers and the ability to assist people to accommodate change and share power and control are important leadership issues. Lambert pointed out that "inquiry requires our natural inquisitiveness to surface, which can only occur when sufficient time and space are allotted for dialogue and critical questions. **Trust is essential** as well, and arises when people come to understand each other and decide that others can be counted on to act in ways consistent with personal and community values" [emphasis added] (Lambert, 2003, p. 12). Effective leaders build trust by listening carefully and by working collaboratively to bring the will of the school community to reality. "A principal builds relationships and develops trust and rapport by treating others with respect. He [sic] admits mistakes, shares honestly, shows humility, listens and treats others professionally, thanks others for their leadership, and promotes leadership opportunities for the school membership fairly" (Lambert, 2003, p. 119). To be effective in an SBM/SBDM milieu leaders demonstrate interdependence and habits that others trust. Covey cited Aristotle as saying, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit" (1989, p. 46). Covey went on and pointed out: "Independent people who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently may be good individual producers, but they won't be good leaders or team players." Such individuals are not "coming from the paradigm of interdependence necessary to succeed…in organizational reality" (1989, pp. 50-51).

Interdependence also means that people must understand the truth behind any intension in order to establish a high degree of trust. From a hermeneutic perspective there must be a concerted effort on the leader's part to bridge understanding of the familiar and the unfamiliar. To ensure that a productive interdependent relationship exists, the beliefs or "prejudices" of those involved in SBM/SBDM must be confronted respectfully, with dignity, and with understanding, but they must be brought out into the open. Gadamer maintained, "Prejudice is a necessary condition of all historical…understanding. Acts of understanding or interpretation…always involve two different aspects: namely, the overcoming of the strangeness of the phenomenon to be understood, and its transformation into an object of familiarity in which the horizon of the historical phenomenon and that of the interpreter become united" (as cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 38). The prejudices that people bring are "the horizons of a particular present" (Gadamer, as cited in Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 272). The principal's role in an SBM/SBDM milieu is to assist people to expand their horizons by first assisting them to reveal their prejudices.

> Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence an essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 269)

The concept of horizon is important because it presents us with possibilities. Those possibilities are associated with the expansion of a horizon such that those involved in SBM/SBDM gain a wider vision of what is possible, by looking "beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportions" (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 271)

The prejudices people bring with them constitute the horizon of a particular present beyond which people find it impossible to see. As the research participants engaged in our conversations a number of our prejudices emerged, were clarified, and connected to our personal beliefs about leadership. Some of those beliefs came from the literature we used to substantiate our beliefs, and others came from our focus at university - educational administration or curriculum studies for example. But our particular horizons were not fixed as they were continually being formed as we reevaluated our prejudices. Central to this reevaluation is "the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past" and there "is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons" (Mueller-Vollmer, 1997, p. 272). When we achieve a mutual understanding of a certain aspect of effective leadership practice in an SBM/SBDM milieu that understanding is a "fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves" (1997, p. 272). Achieving a fusion of horizons is central to developing the trust and mutual respect needed in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Principals must practice the skills referred to earlier to assist groups of diverse individuals to come to a common understanding and a mutually agreed to focus. People in an SBM/SBDM milieu must be accepting of each other, tolerant of differences, understanding, empathetic and patient.

Tolerance, understanding, empathy and patience are critical if a leader is to be successful in an SBM/SBDM milieu. Chrislip and Larson pointed out:

> The incredible difficulties involved in creating and sustaining collaboration may tempt leaders to simplify the process. They may want to take shortcuts to avoid the frustrations that come from bringing out and dealing with very divergent points of view. And this desire to avoid arguments, clear differences of opinion, the tensions that accompany disagreements, and the time it takes to manage differences often causes people to make a fundamental error in initiating collaboration: that error is to be exclusive rather than inclusive. (1994, p. 78)

An SBM/SBDM school gets its strength, its integrity and its credibility from being inclusive and ensuring that power is shared and that diverse voices are included in the decision-making process. By being open and accountable, all educators can earn the trust of students, parents, community members and their colleagues as they work to include them in the decision-making process, and as they work to enhance everyone's understanding of power relationships.

Engaging people in a dialogue about the sharing of power and effective decision-making, and listening carefully to what they say begins the process of earning people's trust. Leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu recognize that they will still be held accountable for the success of the students. But they recognize that those involved in the decision-making process share that responsibility and know that success will only be achieved if they work collaboratively and cooperatively together. This is a "new theory of schooling that rethinks how the burdens of responsibility and accountability should be shared, and that provides a new understanding of what leadership is and how it works" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 8). In this new theory of schooling there must be a trusting and open relationship, and a relationship open to new possibilities.

To promote a trusting and open relationship effective leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu act as critical friends. A critical friend asks, "provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 89). As a critical friend the principal ensures that the necessary time is taken to comprehend the environmental context and the outcomes desired. Leaders that act as critical friends are collaborative leaders who "are sustained by their deeply democratic belief that people have the capacity to create their own visions and solve their own problems" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 146). Collaborative leaders are facilitators who:

> Bring the appropriate people together (being broadly inclusive) in constructive ways (creating a credible, open process) with good information (bringing about a shared understanding of problems and concerns), they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community. The leadership role is to convene, energize, facilitate, and sustain the process. (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 146)

Language and trust in an SBM/SBDM milieu

An effective leader in an SBM/SBDM milieu practices facilitative leadership that helps people construct meaning by leading the conversation, which is a constructivist leadership role. Lambert et al. (1995) noted, "*The primary role of the constructivist leader is to lead the conversation*" [italics in original] (p.83). The purpose of such conversations are to provide an opportunity for participants to dialogue and construct meaning together to fo[illegible]mon purpose. This is exceedingly challenging work because linguistic systems are complex and somewhat unpredictable. Participants make conscious and unconscious linguistic moves and language choices that can cause meaning to ebb and flow. Facilitative leadership ensures that meaning is explored "with others as a way of deepening understanding. By using linguistic moves and being conscious of language choices, a leader creates spirals of meaning that are continuously formed and re-formed" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 104). Lambert et al. stated, "linguistic moves create simple rules that change the jumble of sentences into meaning-making contexts" (1995, p. 105). Gadamer would have disagreed with Lambert's assertion about conscious linguistic moves, as he believed our use of language is unconscious and that meaning embedded in text can be problematic. Gadamer noted:

> Especially in the field of semantics we are confronted with the problem that our own use of language is unconscious. How do we discover that there is a difference between our own customary usage and that of the text? I think we must say that generally we do so in the experience of being pulled up short by the text. Either it does not yield any meaning at all or its meaning is not compatible with what we had expected. This is what brings us up short and alerts us to a possible difference in usage. (1975/1989, p. 268)

This does not mean that as principals engage members of the SBM/SBDM community in a conversation they will forget their fore-meanings concerning the content of their ideas. All that the principal can do is ask participants to remain open to the ideas and meaning put forward by others. What principals must remember is that openness will include individuals "situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of [their] own meanings" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 268). Gadamer maintained

> that meanings represent a fluid multiplicity of possibilities (in comparison to the agreement presented by a language and a vocabulary), but within this multiplicity of what can be thought – i.e., of what a reader can find meaningful and hence expect to find – not everything is possible; and if a person fails to hear what the other person is really saying, he will not be able to fit what he has misunderstood into the range of his own various expectations of meaning. Thus there is a criterion here also. The *hermeneutic task becomes of itself a questioning of things* and is always in part so defined [italics in original]. (pp. 268-269)

To be effective, leaders in an SBM/SBDM milieu ensure that a limited number of rules are used to frame, deepen, and move the conversation along to further enhance the production of meaning. Members of the school community are engaged in conversations that are dynamic so that they can deepen their understanding by "reflecting, summarizing, or inquiring about the field of meaning" (Lambert et al., 1995, p. 105). Gadamer noted, "Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people" (1975/1989, p. 384). But, facilitative leaders must be cognizant of their use of such techne and the potential for the manipulation and manufacturing of meaning.

A facilitative leader can help to create a conceptual field that deepens and shifts members' thinking by utilizing a techne such as questioning techniques and the rephrasing of ideas. Such techniques can assist members of the school community to clarify their understanding of emerging concepts. The hermeneutic problem, however, is not the correct mastery of language but the achievement of a "proper understanding about the subject matter, which takes place in the medium of language" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 385). Conversation is, therefore, a dynamic process that provides an opportunity for understanding to occur. It is imperative that individuals open themselves up to the meaning put forward by others and that that person's particular point of view be accepted as valid for that individual. Members of the group must immerse themselves in the conversation to get a better understanding of what is being said and the intentions of the speaker. All understanding is interpretation and all interpretation takes place in the medium of language. Gadamer noted:

> The medium of a language…allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language. Thus the hermeneutical phenomenon proves to be a special case of the general relationship between thinking and speaking, whose enigmatic intimacy conceals the role of language in thought. (1975/1989, p. 389)

The use of a single word or phrase can evoke significant emotions within a group. A principal can de-emphasize one voice and amplify another by simply paraphrasing what was said. This attempt at verification can move the group along in their efforts to come to an understanding or allow the speaker to explain further what was intended. Senge (1990) noted that group meetings might become situations in which individuals articulate their own views but demonstrate little if any willingness to understand the views of others. The goal of the facilitative leader in an SBM/SBM milieu must be to assist participants to arrive at the best understanding possible and paraphrasing, inquiring, and articulation of ideas might be of assistance in this regard.

To this end the principal may use structural guides that come from taxonomies of questions to help with planning and reflection, but they must be exceedingly careful because they are again making use of a techne. This may not yield a genuine conversation because the will of the partner posing the questions is in a sense conducting the conversation. Gadamer pointed out "a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it" (1975/1989, p. 383). Costa and Garmston (1994) outlined how a process of Cognitive Coaching can assist people to reflect upon their intended and actual outcome by recalling data that was used to support their position, but it is in a sense scripting the conversation and not falling into a conversation. The reflective practitioner work of Schon (1983) can provide a structure for personal construction of meaning. It is important, however, that structures like initiating activities that are intended to promote a spirit of inquiry, constructing that is intended to help people learn to live with some level of ambiguity, and closing activities that are intended to create group memory and commitment not limit meaning-making, but enhance it.

Maintaining openness to the possible and to meaning making is vital. Participants in a conversation do not know in advance what will emerge or be the result. Interpretation and understanding can be greatly enabled by the utilization of open-ended questions. The manner in which the facilitative leader frames a question can reduce or expand the ability to construct meaning. Framing questions that are not meaningful detracts and confuses the process. As an example, Costa and Garmston (1994) and Laborde (1988) noted that cross-categorical questions search for meaning by generating new contexts or assist in reframing the focus of the group. Such questions open up possibilities as opposed to limiting them, and facilitate thinking on a much broader level. It is essential therefore that individuals and leaders refrain from asking questions of the group that already have answers embedded in them. Facilitative leaders must recognize that language is the medium of understanding and using a techne to produce an understanding of a particular subject matter is inappropriate in an SBM/SBDM milieu. In such a milieu, conversation is a process, which enables understanding; it is not a process that should be used to manufacture understanding. Gadamer stated: " The hermeneutical problem concerns not the correct mastery of language but coming to a proper understanding about the subject matter, which takes place in the medium of language" (1975/1989, p. 385).

Paraphrasing can assist the group to clarify meaning. Paraphrase is derived from the Greek "para" (through or beyond) and "phrazein" (to point out or to speak). Dictionaries define paraphrase as a restatement in another form. Paraphrasing can be used to bring focus to the discussion and to move the conversation in another direction that is agreed to by the group. Paraphrasing summarizes meaning and with the group's concurrence, selectively guides the conversation in a particular direction. But care must be taken not to use paraphrasing to manufacture meaning. True conversation ensures that people remain open to the meaning of others. "Each person opens himself [sic] to the other, truly accepts his [sic] point of view as valid and transposes himself [sic] into the other to such an extent that he [sic] understands not the particular individual but what he [sic] says" (Gadamer, 1975/1989, p. 385). The facilitative leader tries to ensure that the environment is supportive of such conversations, and that they take place in a safe and supportive environment that contributes to individuals maintaining such openness.

The facilitative leader as a reflective practitioner makes use of reflection to pause and give time for consideration. It may be a pause in speech or an extended period of quiet time taken to mull over what has been presented. But it is imperative that we understand that conversation is about interpretation and understanding, and not reproduction. Such a process may use reflective opportunities to give due consideration to the distance between one's own opinion and that of another that might be considered irreconcilable, but it may also promote a opportunity to bridge such a difference. A compromise can sometimes be achieved in the to and fro of dialogue as in such a conversation there can be a weighing and balancing of possibilities.

The facilitative leader can seek a solution, but it must be understood that such a solution will never be more than a compromise.

Facilitative leaders can also make use of Dilts' logical levels to frame cross-categorical questions. Dilts (1992) identified five different levels:

> (1) The basic level is your *environment*, your external constraints. (2) You operate on that environment through your *behavior*. (3) Your behavior is guided by your mental maps (schema) and your strategies, which define your *capabilities*. (4) These capabilities are organized by *belief systems*…and (5) beliefs are organized by *identity* [italics in original]. (p. 1)

These levels can assist in the construction of meaning. Schon (1983) and Senge (1990) presented a somewhat similar manner of thinking. Schon described how individuals could reflect on their espoused beliefs as they relate to their specific behaviors. For his part, Senge pointed out that there can be an exploration of mental models or capabilities in relation to the defensive behaviors people utilize as one of the five disciplines for a learning community. In these explorations an individual's horizon can be decisive. But as decisive as it is, it is a horizon that an individual brings to a conversation as an opinion that may still be open to the possibility of fusing with another's, through conversation. Such a fusion is what Gadamer called a "fusion of horizons" (1975/1989, p. 388). Questioning possibilities may result in movement in thinking that enables individuals to reconstitute their ideas. When individuals reflect on their mental maps or schemas, their beliefs and identity, and their values and capabilities, their conversations become rich in meaning making and open to the possible.

## The emergence of a different understanding of leadership

The original purpose of my research was to determine whether the practices of leaders determined to be successful in the Effective Schools Research were applicable to principals in decentralized decision-making milieux. As I gained a deeper understanding of hermeneutics, and the significance to my research of Gadamer's assertion that people are guided by their own particular set of prejudices, I realized that my purpose was not achievable. As I reflected on my readings, struggled with my own thoughts, cogitated on the reasoning of my research partners, and analysed my research data, it became clear to me just how deeply my original purpose was immersed in modernity. I now understood how my prejudices helped me to feel very comfortable in a world of precise measurement, analysis, and prediction as a way to identify and pass on to others effective leadership practices. What I did not initially comprehend was that to achieve a deeper understanding of leadership I needed to explore the original meaning of the question, "What is leadership?" That exploration of the meaning of the question, and the question itself, opened up a number of other possibilities.

As I explored other possibilities that pertained to the intent of my research, I came to the realization of the significance of facilitative leadership and the importance of the effect that paradoxical situations have on the concept of leadership. As an example, the stated purpose of decentralized decision-making is to empower those closest to students to make the best and most informed decisions possible. At the same time, however, governments put in place many barriers that restrict and limit the flexibility that students, teachers, parents, the community and principals have to engage in authentic decision-making.

Leaders who believe in empowerment and decentralized decision-making as an essential part of the democratic process face enormous challenges. Those who believe that an integral part of decentralized decision-making is the engagement of all those who should be involved in the decision-making process face a momentous conundrum. How do such leaders ensure those decision-makers are involved in a legitimate process and not a façade? They can do so through facilitative leadership that empowers people in a legitimate decision-making process even when there are many barriers and restrictions.

One of the first steps is to ensure that the vestiges of such power and control are revealed and understood. Leaders may then work with their partners to confront the enormous challenges imposed by a system of education that seems to be focused on sorting and rewarding. Clearly understanding that there are regulations and barriers that inhibit the decision-making process, provides an opportunity for all those involved in decision-making to grapple with the inconsistencies and incompatibilities of the messages immersed within the educational reform that attempts to use decentralized decision-making to increase student achievement. Decision-makers must understand the limitations that reduce their flexibility in order that they can focus on assisting all students to fulfil their diverse potential.

It may be morally repugnant to work in an educational system that pronounces a belief in decentralized decision-making, but provides numerous examples that there is no real support for such an initiative. What I came to realize, but did not want to admit, was that such a restructuring effort was really an attempt to foster a particular capacity among principals to increase their perceived powers, and thus their productivity, without really enhancing their autonomy, and the autonomy of those engaged in the decision-making process.

As I began to question the nature of this social reality in education and the very processes by which I came to know it, I gained a deeper and more disturbing level of understanding of the micropolitics of power within education and its impact on leadership. I am committed to the belief that facilitative leadership will help those involved in the decision-making process to wrestle with this dilemma. In so doing, they too can be given the opportunity to think reflectively and critically about practice as they go about creating their own visions and solving the challenges and problems they face as they work within this type of educational structure and attempt to participate in authentic decentralized decision-making.

In such an educational environment, leadership must be imbued with *phronesis*, which involves ethical know-how and the understanding that knowledge is always applied according to the demands of the situation in which those involved in the decision-making process are immersed. Ethical conduct and know how are crucial as decision-makers work collaboratively with their partners to effectively address the paradoxes in such an educational restructuring initiative. As Gadamer pointed out, there is a significant difference between moral and technical knowledge. That difference is *phronesis* (moral knowledge) that involves a self-knowledge, which is not required in the application of technical know-how. "Technical knowledge is knowledge about means and in a sense is itself means, *phronesis* in a curious way…embraces both means and end" (Gadamer, as cited in Gallagher, 1992, p. 153). Gadamer felt that technical knowledge requires cleverness when being applied, whereas moral knowledge mandates that there be understanding in its application.

There is no place for dictatorial behaviour in a decentralized decision-making milieu, no matter how diplomatically it is practiced locally or provincially. Empowerment and shared decision-making must adhere to the democratic principles, beliefs, and values on which it is based no matter how eschewed the provincial initiative might be. Decentralization is not about controlling relationships through diplomatic and subtle means. Facilitative-democratic approaches to leadership are about building open, collaborative and participatory relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance for diversity and ambiguity.

Gadamer clarified for me the difference between moral and technical knowledge in that moral knowledge (phronesis) involves a self-knowledge, which is not required in technical know-how. My original purpose focused on developing the technical know-how of leadership practices in a decentralized milieu. My exploration of other possibilities led me to an understanding of the application of facilitative leadership practices permeated with phronesis. Phronesis as interpretative knowing, as praxis (understanding as application), and as a concern for others—other contexts and other ways of seeing and being in the decentralized decision-making milieu.

In this final chapter I have reflected on the question of leadership possibilities in a decentralized milieu. As such, my research does not simply constitute an addition to the body of knowledge on how leadership should be practiced in a decentralized environment, rather it is a reflection more generally on the deeper meanings of educational leadership. De-centralizing leadership necessarily opens up basic questions of the purposes of the public school, and the relative roles of parents, students, and teachers in deciding those purposes. Thus my dissertation should not be seen as constituting a totalising discourse about leadership in a decentralized milieu but, rather, it is a self-reflexive and deconstructive process through which emerged the particularity and provisionality of my sense making about new leadership skills and a different conception of leadership practice.

I view my research as a generator of questions and possibilities to be explored further by reflective practitioners. Such exploration is a creature of the reflective practitioner's own time and place, and the period in history in which decentralized decision-making exists. I believe that my research provides an opportunity for those interested in exploring leadership to problematize the whole question of leadership and the intent of restructuring initiatives in an effort to inform practice.

Our society faces the constant challenges associated with change. Challenges like the increasing demands to do more with less financial resources, to increase the level of achievement of all students while at the same time meeting their increasingly diverse needs, and the coordination of a wide variety of human services delivered by a multiplicity of agencies and organizations through the school. The paradoxes and inconsistencies inherent in all these challenges increase the pressure on those in formal leadership positions. We can no longer assume that there are a sufficient set of shared assumptions, perceptions, meanings and beliefs. But what we can do is engage in a continuing process of dialogue by which a wide range of people construct shared meaning by which they devise innovative solutions to the paradoxes and challenges they face. In so doing they participate in authentic decision-making reflective of their local context. Working collaboratively together I believe it is possible to challenge the imposed barriers and restrictions by making room for real dialogue at the front end of the decision-making process. We can do so in a more explicit and systematic way that will allow the reshaping of public education and the celebration of its diversity.

Through conversation those interested in leadership can engage partners in a deeper level of questioning about the meaning of leadership, decentralization, participatory democracy and the role of interpretative communities. Such questioning opens up the “possible,” which is the opportunity that comes with viewing leadership and decentralized decision-making differently as we confront the beliefs that we hold about our work, our lives and a province's educational initiative as we thoughtfully challenge those meanings and their applicability.

### A superintendent's final personal note on leadership inquiry

Engaging in this study has dramatically altered my view of leadership and educational restructuring. I hope those who choose to reflect on leadership practice will accept my research findings in a conceptual way. Institutions, structures and roles need to be shaped and reshaped as a result of a continuous process of dialogue, reflection, and learning as we face the many challenges that are before all those committed to participating in, and improving public education.

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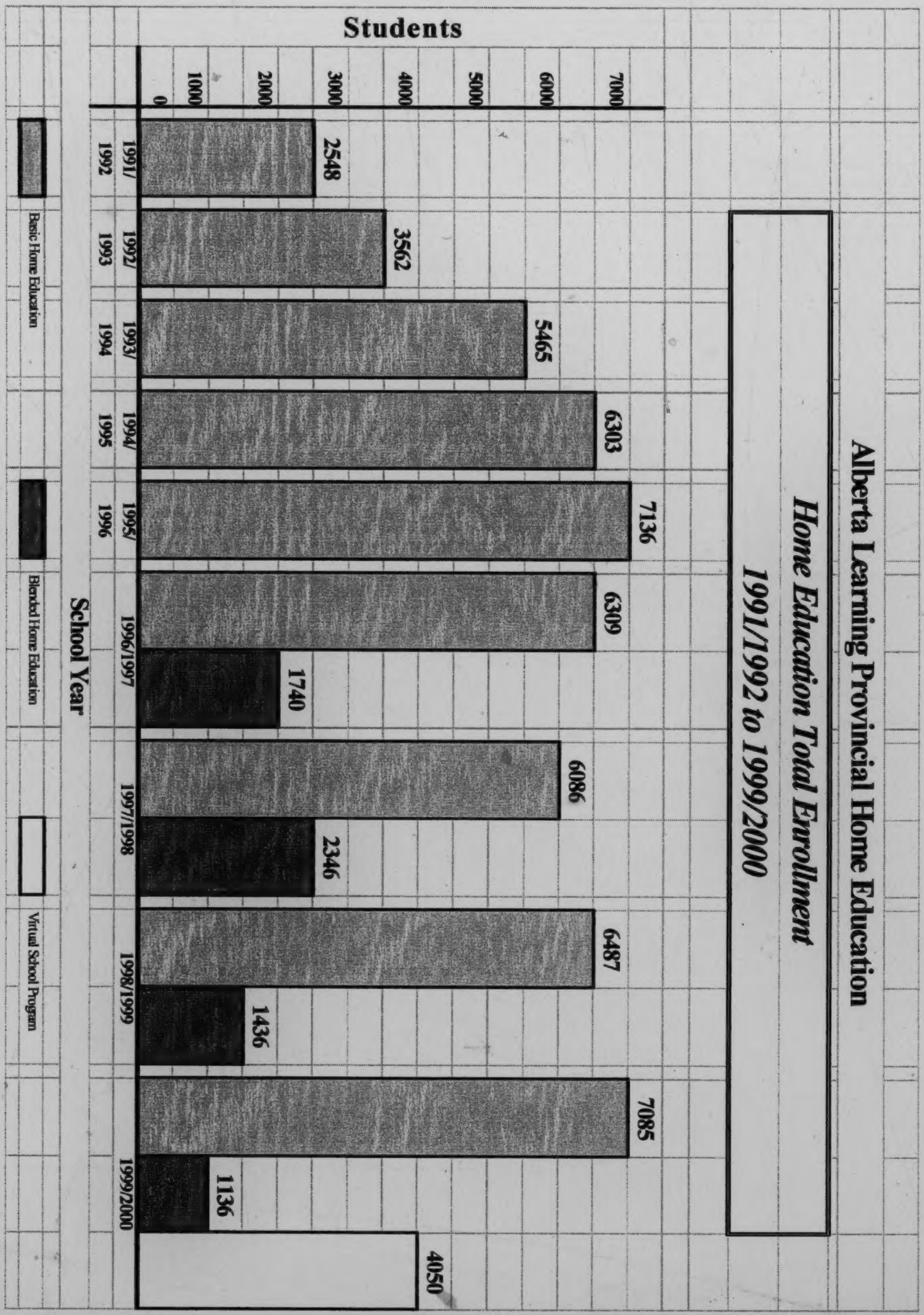
## Appendix A


Alberta Learning Provincial Home Education
Home Education Total Enrollment
1991/1992 to 1999/2000
Students
0
1000
2000
3000
4000
5000
6000
7000
School Year
1991/1992
1992/1993
1993/1994
1994/1995
1995/1996
1996/1997
1997/1998
1998/1999
1999/2000
2548
3562
5465
6303
7136
6309
1740
6086
2346
6487
1436
7085
1136
4050
Basic Home Education
Blended Home Education
Virtual School Program

## Appendix B "Effective" and "Successful" Models of Schooling

| "Effective Schools" | "Successful Schools" |
|---|---|
| 1. Definition:<br>An effective School is most commonly defined by researchers as one whose students are achieving well as evidenced by achievement test scores in the basic skills areas. | A successful schools is an image of schooling characterized by a strong commitment to multiple goals and within which students demonstrate by tests and other means intellectual values, high academic attainment, responsible citizenship, moral and ethical character, aesthetic expression, and emotional and physical well-being. |
| 2. Research Base:<br>School effectiveness studies are typically conducted in elementary schools within urban school districts. School that are considered to be doing well (effective) are compared with those that are not (ineffective). Commonalities among effective school are identified in such areas as instructional management, teaching methods and behaviors, curriculum and instructional design, principal behaviors, and attitudes of teachers and principals. Effective and ineffective school are determined on the basis of student achievement test scores – typically in reading and mathematics. Weber (1971) and Edmonds (1979) would be examples of school research pioneers. | The research base for the successful schools model is comprehensive and extensive, including studies of schools at all levels. Research strategies include case studies, reflection and observations of experts, quantitative studies, and commission reports. The studies and reports are not deliberatedly a part of a successful schools research tradition but taken together provide common characteristics that help construct the image of a successful school. The works of Boyer (1983), Goodlad (1984), Lightfoot (1983), Ravitch (1984), and Lipsitz (1984) are examples of the breadth of literature contributing to the image of a successful school. |
| 3. Philosophy:<br>The school effectiveness model is based on an inclusive philosophy that assumes that all students can learn the basics if the model is implemented properly. Often some form of "masterly learning" is prescribed that allows the pacing of instruction to match student learning rates. The pioneering school effectiveness research was conducted in inner city schools, as part of a commitment to extend to poor children equal educational opportunity. | Successful schools combine several characteristics of the American tradition that have endured over time: attention to the "egalitarian ideal" balanced with the values of hard work, competition, standards, and success; a respect for the power and intrinsic interest of the academic disciplines; a commitment to intellectual values; attention to the requirements of responsible citizenship in a democratic society; and a commitment to provide developmentally sound schooling. This agenda is best implemented under conditions that allow parents, teachers, and administrators to be in charge of schooling. The model is inclusive in that all students are believed capable of success in academically and developmentally sound schools. |

## Appendix C: **Differences Between Management and Leadership**

| Management | Leadership |
|---|---|
| About predictability and order: attaining consistent results, meeting requirements | About change: changing environmental pressures, the need to be successful |
| Planning and budgeting: setting goals, defining detailed steps, allocating resources | Setting a direction: creating a vision and developing a strategy to make the vision a reality |
| Organizing and staffing: creating an organizational structure and a set of jobs, staffing, delegating responsibility, planning, and monitoring | Aligning people: communicating the new direction to those who can form coalitions that understand the vision and are committed to it achievement |
| Controlling and problem solving: monitoring results versus the plan, taking corrective action | Motivating and inspiring: keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles, by appealing to basic needs, values, and emotions |
| Controlling people by pushing them in the right direction: authority, job performance, and evaluation | Motivating people by satisfying basic human needs: achievement, sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem, a sense of control over one's life. The ability to live up to one's ideals (Reynolds, 1997, p. 10) |

## Appendix D

## Conservative, Moderate, Radical and Critical Hermeneutics

(1) *Conservative hermeneutics* is based on the nineteenth-century hermeneutical tradition defined by Schleiermacher and Dilthey. It is clearly the approach taken by the legal historian Emilio Betti and the American professor of literature and educational reformer, E. D. Hirsch…The aim of interpretation is to reproduce the meaning or intention of the author by following well-defined hermeneutical canons that guide reading.

(2) *Moderate hermeneutics* is developed by theorists such as Gadamer and Ricoeur. They contend that no method can guarantee an absolutely objective interpretation of an author's work because, as readers, we are conditioned by prejudices of our own historical existence. These prejudices, however, are not simply a matter of time and place; rather, beyond that, they are embedded in language. They are the changing biases of various traditions, which are not past and by gone but are operative and living in every reader and every text. Language does two things in the interpretive process: it limits our interpretive powers and keeps us from gaining an absolute access to any textual meaning, even the meaning of our own texts (the author has no privilege in this regard); and (b) it enables *some* access to textual meaning. This enabling power can be defined in terms of dialogical conversation, a 'fusion of horizons,' a creative communication between reader and text. As interpreters, however, we never achieve a complete or objective interpretation since we, limited by our own historical circumstance and by our own language, are inextricably involved in the interpretive conversation. This is in clear violation of conservative hermeneutical canons which seek for and promise objectivity. Theorist like Betti and Hirsch worry about the subjectivity…. Moderate theorists respond that, since interpretation has a dialogical character, it is not purely subjective. No matter how we read Plato, for example, we never end up with Milton; the text itself constrains our interpretation. Subjective and objective interpretations, rather than being the only two possibilities, are two unattainable extremes of interpretation. Moderate hermeneutics proposes a somewhat optimistic view of interpretation. Interpretation involves creativity and not just reproduction; the reader participates, just as much as the author does, in putting together the meaning…. This optimism might be contrasted, on the one side, with what some would call the wishful thinking of the conservative school and, on the other side, with what might appear to be the nihilism of radical hermeneutics.

(3) *Radical hermeneutics* is inspired by both Nietzsche and Heidegger, and is practiced by deconstructionists and poststructuralists like Derrida and Foucault…Interpretation requires playing with the words of the text rather than using them to find truth in or beyond the text…the radical reader is skeptical about creative interpretations that establish communication with original meaning; rather, for radical hermeneutics, original meaning is unattainable and the best we can do critical is to stretch the limits of language to break upon fresh insight…Radical hermeneutics aims at deconstructing the meaning of a text, not in order to analyze it or to reconstruct a different meaning. It is not replacement of one text with another, but a displacement of certain metaphysical concepts such as unity, identity, meaning, or authorship, which operate in and around the text.

(4) *Critical hermeneutics* has been developed in the writings of critical theorists like Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel who find inspiration in Marx,Freud, and the Frankfurt School of social criticism. Critical hermeneutics can be characterized as a curious combination of radical and conservative elements. On the one hand, it is radical to the extent that its social and political aims continue a tradition that is rightly call 'radical.' The aim of theory is social and individual emancipation from the political power and economic exploitation found in advanced (capitalistic as well as communistic) class systems. Hermeneutics is employed as a means of penetrating false consciousness, discovering the ideological nature of our belief systems, promoting distortion-free communication, and thereby accomplishing a liberating consensus (Gallagher, 1992, p. 9-12).

## Appendix E

## Summary of Proposal

The goals of school improvement, effectiveness and accountability have been with us for many years. These goals have been applied by a generation of educators and others to schools in order to further the debate regarding the provision of a better quality of education to children.

To achieve the goals of educational reform the public school system has undergone many attempts at reform and restructuring. Every attempt at reform and restructuring is invested with its own particular philosophy, ideology or agenda. In *Better By Design? A Consumer's Guide to Schoolwide Reform* Traub (1999) states that "schools by their very nature are expressions of beliefs, and philosophers have been devising ideal schools since the time of Plato" (p. 2).

Levin and Young (1999) state that major reform initiatives are occurring to public schools in Canada. They point out the focus of one such initiative is the "decentralization of management responsibility from intermediate bodies to individual schools" (p. 1).

This decentralization initiative demonstrates the increasing influence of the corporate sector on public schools. That influence is significant because applying corporate sector ideology and discourse can dramatically alter the goals of public education, the processes utilized to attain those goals, and the leadership required of school principals. Foucault (1988) points out that a particular discourse can also be a "formidable tool of control and power" (p. 114), in this case, over public schools.

Decentralization of management[25] embodies shared decision-making[26] and site-based decision-making and is a significant departure from the traditional centralized decision-making processes utilized by school jurisdictions. Murphy and Beck point out that advocates of shared decision-making and site-based decision-making justify this move by stating that:

- The quality of decisions about educational programs will improve if the decisions are made by the persons with the greatest knowledge about a school and its students.
- Change is constant and requires that individual schools are increasingly flexible and responsive.

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[25] Decentralized management is about delegating management decisions that have been made centrally to the building level (Chion-Kenney, 1994, p.iv).

[26] Shared decision-making is also known as school-based decision making or site-based decision making and is defined by Alberta Learning in Policy 1.8.2 as follows: "School-based decision making involves the whole school community in teaching and learning in order to ensure high levels of student achievement. School-based decision making is a process through which major decisions are made at the school level about policies, instructional programs and services, and how funds are allocated to support them; and 'community' means a school's students, their parents and other community-based support elements available to the school" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. 2).

- Change mandated from the top does not work.
- Participation in decision making will result in higher levels of commitment, effort, and morale. (Murphy & Beck as cited in Reynolds, 1997, p. 2)

Those wanting school reform are demanding that educational leaders become more efficient and effective, and be held accountable for the effectiveness of their schools. Harrison and Kachur (1999) reference the issue of accountability when they state, "according to the government, the overhaul of the education system was necessary in order to bring costs under control and to make the system more *efficient*, *effective*, and *accountable*" [italics added] (p. 151).

Enormous pressure to make schools more effective, efficient and accountable is now placed squarely on the shoulders of principals. The major difference this time is that it is reported that more is known about what makes schools effective. Studies like the Exemplary Schools Project; Manitoba School Improvement Project; Halton, Ontario Effective School Project, and the international research on school effectiveness are held up as examples of how to improve schools.

The move to decentralize management, the focus on efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, and the ideologies pressuring school reform will significantly impact the leadership provided by principals. Yet the research on what makes schools effective and the subsequent research on leadership in effective schools were done in traditional non-decentralized school settings not in the non-traditional site-based management (SBM)/site-based decision-making (SBDM) milieu. There is also considerable disagreement in the literature about what constitutes an effective school and effective leadership in the traditional non-decentralized school setting.

Since there is disagreement about what constitutes an effective school and effective leadership in the traditional school setting, it is imperative that research be undertaken to explore the following question: What should effective leadership practices be for principals in the non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu? This research will also examine whether principals might utilize critical reflection to become more reflective and re-creative in their approaches to leadership.

Working with three principals as action research partners this study hopes to determine what they believe effective leadership practices should be for principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu given that participatory democracy is an integral part of SBM/SBDM, the public education environment in Canada, and in particular, a Western Canadian province, and the research on effective schools and effective principals.

This research also provides a professional growth opportunity for principals by giving them a chance to critically reflect upon the definition of effectiveness, the ideology behind school reform, and their understanding of effective leadership practices in a non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu. By being involved in this research project, principals will have the opportunity to transform their leadership and by extension facilitate the provision of an enhanced education that will benefit students.

The proposed research is significant as there appears to be a void in the literature and research regarding what effective leadership practices should be for principals in the non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu. Studies have examined leadership behaviour in schools determined to be effective (Chrispeels & Meaney, 1985; Smith & Andrews, 1989), and in organizations determined to be effective (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; & Peters & Waterman, 1982). Those studies, however, took place in traditional school settings not in non-traditional SBM/SBDM settings.

It is also significant to note that I have not been able to find any other action research where a Superintendent of Schools has attempted to become involved in transformational leadership by taking an active role in the professional growth of principals by involving them in a collaborative action research project of this nature. This unique aspect of this study has the potential of making an important contribution to our understanding of leadership, and whether a Superintendent can engage in transformative leadership by exploring effective leadership practices with principals in his or her jurisdiction

This research also provides for a professional development opportunity by giving principals a chance to critically reflect upon the definition of effectiveness, the ideology behind school reform, and their understanding of effective leadership practices in a non-traditional SBM/SBDM milieu. By being involved in this research project, principals will have the opportunity to transform their leadership and by extension facilitate the provision of an enhanced education that will benefit students.

Method:

The proposed qualitative study will be an action research project that will approach understanding through the activities of a hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975).

Action research has been shown to be an effective process through which the action research facilitator and co-researchers are provided with an opportunity to emerge from a project with a deeper self-understanding and potential for personal and professional transformation. The importance of a deeper self-understanding relates to the deep commitment needed for lasting change to occur. Cross and Rice (2000) point out that "many studies of effective leadership indicate that without commitment from the front-line leader (the principal, in the case of a school) it is impossible to achieve lasting change" (p. 61).

Action research is a research orientation that can employ a variety of theoretical discourses. One of the most promising theoretical discourses for this study is hermeneutics. The methodology of hermeneutics[27] is one research orientation that may help educators critically reflect on the language and structure of the existing paradigm of education. Hermeneutics invites educators to alter their views of education in favour of less restrictive ways of conversing about leadership and SBM/SBDM.

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[27] Hermeneutics is "the route to philosophical reflection, to reflection premised on the assumption that by following the indication of symbolic meaning one will arrive at a deeper understanding of human existence" (Ricoeur, 1981, p.6).

Engaging principals in a collaborative action research inquiry informed by hermeneutics to come to a deeper understanding of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu has the potential of being a positive growth experience. Interpretability is the opportunity that action research offers for interpreting the human experience at a personal level rather than having that interpretation provided to principals as preconceived ideas like those in the literature on effective schools and leadership in effective schools. Action research also opens up the possibility of conducting practice more thoughtfully, that is practice that is thoughtfully imbued with theory.

This research project will take place in a large urban centre in a Western Canadian province. The Board of that large urban centre has recently completed a collegiate review that determined that there is a perception that "too many resources were going to central administration" (Scharf, Kulba, Jacknicke, Leonard & Sackney, 2000, p. 12). The review notes "schools would be better served if more decisions were made at the school level as opposed to at central office" (Scharf, et al., 2000, p. 13). Parent Councils in this jurisdiction state that their involvement is "largely in terms of being advised of decisions already made" (p. 16). There is also a clear indication from teachers of a "call for decentralization", but many in-school administrators indicate that while there needs "to be more decentralization of authority and resource allocation to the school level,... they did not want to go ... to a site-based management system" (pp. 17-18).

Four principals, who are interested in the issue of leadership in a SBM/SBDM milieu, will be invited to become active participants in this action research project. At a principals' meeting I will provide a general explanation of the action research project and indicate that a general invitation to participate in the project will be issued via mail. I will emphasize that no one is under any obligation to participate in the action research project.

As this urban jurisdiction has approximately 50 principals, the selection of participants will be based on the following criteria:

- principals who have indicated an interest in being involved in the action research project;
- principals who have more than five years of experience as principals; and
- representation from elementary/junior, and senior high school principals.

Those principals who continue to express interest in participating will be met with individually in order to determine their interest to:

- explore the central research question, "What should the effective leadership practices be for principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu?";
- explore the ambiguity that exists in the research on effective schools and effective principals that has not taken into consideration the structural context of SBM/SBDM;
- commit the time necessary to the action research project; and

- collaborate with me as a co-researcher, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, taking into consideration my position within the organization.

Co-researcher's consent will be obtained through letters signed by participants and the researcher.

The action research project will commence in February and the action research group will meet once every three to four weeks until the end of June. Action researchers will engage in a cycle of reading, conversations that allow for in-depth exploration of their experiences and facilitate sharing of insights and interpretive dialogue. At each meeting of the action research group, the co-researchers will decide on the agenda of each meeting, topics to be covered, the direction they would like their readings and actions to take, additional readings, and the frequency and length of each meeting.

The agenda for the first meeting will have to be set by myself as action research facilitator, as the action research group has not met as yet. That agenda will consist of:

- a brief summary of the action research project;
- a description of the expectations for participants in the context of action research, including reading, the opportunity to keep a private journal, sharing understandings, insights, and perspectives, and engaging in interpretive dialogue;
- a discussion of action research participant's expectations;
- an initial sharing of action research participant's understandings of the question: In your opinion, what makes a principal effective?;
- a critiquing and negotiation of proposed guiding principles (see Appendix I); and
- finally, a group discussion as to how we should proceed, including frequency, location, and topics for future sessions.

Both written and recorded data will be collected from group sessions and individual conversations with principals. The recordings will facilitate the analysis of the discourse on leadership. The research facilitator will review the recordings to identify themes and to provide these as part of the written transcript to each of the members of the action research group in advance of the next meeting.

The members of the action research group will be encouraged to keep a journal. The action research facilitator will keep a journal so that I can critically reflect on my dialogical journal. If co-researchers choose to share material from their journals, this information as well as additional reflections or material will be taken into consideration.

Engaging in action research is a direct attempt to influence living practice in an effort to bring about material improvements. From this perspective, it is important to recognize the possible disruption or disturbance this action may create for co-researchers. There is therefore, the possibility that co-researchers will experience changes that may make it difficult or uncomfortable living in, or returning to, a work environment that at best is insensitive to, and at worst intolerant of, their changing understandings. However, the very point of the action research project is to liberate co-researchers from the belief that there are finite answers. As action research team members, we will explore ways to integrate the newfound possibilities into our lives without alienating those with whom we work and share a common bond.

Hermeneutics provides a process or a context through which the project group can collectively reconcile role conflicts by clarifying the hierarchical challenges that relate to my role as Superintendent of Schools and their role as principals, their issues and concerns, and formulate new ways of envisioning their particular environment, and this research environment. "This exploration reveals the taken-for-granted visions and versions of reality that make up people's day-to-day life-worlds, bringing their unquestioned assumptions, views, and beliefs out in the open and displaying them for inspection" (Stringer, 1996, p. 59).

The action research group will revisit these taken-for-granted hierarchical views, and challenge our assumptions so that they can be modified in order to work collaboratively in an organization that espouses that it believes in participatory democracy. I, and we, will have to "walk the talk", as I have made a public commitment to participatory democracy within the organization, and we have made a commitment to the action research process. The action research team members will have to feel free to "hold me to account without fear of repercussion," for any deviation from my public commitment and espoused beliefs. We will also have to feel free to hold each other accountable based on our commitment to the action research process.

In order to minimize the risk to the action research participants further, I will strictly adhere to Saskatoon Board of Education Policy 5001: RESEARCH STUDIES that outlines ethical research practice and the undertakings specified in the document entitled *Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board Section 1: Overview of Research Project and Section 2: Procedures for Observing Ethical Guidelines.*

In summary, improved leadership is not solely related to the exercise of power. The action research process focuses on the formulation of new ways of living and working within the SBM/SBDM milieu. It also provides strategies of leadership that counter the impact of the current overemphasis on the technical and the bureaucratic. In so doing, the action research process enables the formulation of new procedures that take into account those features of an environment that are essentially human and that speak to issues of emotion, value, and identity.

## Appendix F

## Letter of Consent for Participants

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study examining effective leadership practices of principals in a SBM/SBDM milieu, and whether they might utilize critical reflection to become more reflective and recreative in their approaches to leadership.

As indicated during our conversation, you have been invited to participate in a qualitative action research project centered on the activities of a hermeneutic circle. The aim is to provide participants with an opportunity to move beyond reflection on practice into a blending of theory into practice through a cycle of reading, relating the readings to experiences, sharing understandings, engaging in interpretative dialogue, acting, and returning to share new experiences and understandings. This study will commence at the beginning of November and conclude at the end of June. The parameters of the study will be open and flexible, however, and will adjust to meet the needs of the participants and respond to the direction chosen by the action research participants.

Both written and recorded data will be collected from group sessions and individual conversations. Material from participants' journals will be used only if the action research participant chooses to share the data. Additional reflections and material put forward by participants will be taken into consideration. I will transcribe the tapes and provide copies to participants for confirmation, reflection, and interpretation. Please note that, you have the right to withdraw in whole or in part any of your contributions at any time during the collection and review prior to publication. Further, it is extremely important that you know that you have the right to withdraw completely from the research at any time without any personal or professional repercussions.

I wish to reassure you that I take seriously my responsibility for the confidentiality and anonymity of personal information. Therefore all references to individuals and locations will be replaced by fictitious names or alphanumeric references. As well, I ask that you and all participants exercise your responsibility to keep confidential all references to others mentioned in conversation and written data, both before and after publication of the dissertation.

I will be in contact to arrange our first action research participants meeting in the near future. However, should you have any questions or concerns at any time throughout the research please feel free to contact me at home (374-1947), or at work (683-8227). Once again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research, I believe that the experience has the potential of being both informative and rewarding.

Sincerely,

Terry Pearson

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I, ____________________ agree to participate in the research study under the conditions as outlined above.

Dated at ______________________, this _________ day of ______________, 2001.

____________________________________
Research Participant

## Appendix G

## Proposed Timeline for Completion of the Dissertation

- Preparation for Study:
  - September 1, 2001 – November 1, 2001 (8 weeks)
  - Related activities and tasks:
    - Preparation of reading list: journal articles, excerpts from texts, and books
    - Collection of readings so that they are readily available to research participants
    - Preparation for the first meeting of the action research participants as outlined in the proposal
    - Selection of participants
    - Signing of the letters of consent

- Research Study:
  - March 1, 2001– June 30, 2002 (18 weeks)
  - Ongoing related activities and tasks include:
    - Coordinate approximately 9 group sessions, one every two weeks:
      - Phase One – Initial group session: March
        - brief summary of the proposed research;
        - description of the expectations for participants in the context of action research;
        - discussion of the participant's expectations;
        - conversatoin centered on participants reading of the research proposal;
        - initial sharing of participants' understandings of the research question; and
        - finally, a group discussion as to how we should proceed, including frequency, location, and topics for future sessions.

      - Phase Two – Action research spiral, sessions foci: March – June
        - sharing of readings;
        - relating the readings to their experiences and sharing understandings;
        - engaging in interpretative dialogue;
        - discussing possibilities for action; and
        - sharing their new experiences and understandings from action.

      - Phase Three – Closing group sessions and individual conversations: June
        - closing reflection on the research question and implications for practice; and
        - reflecting on their experience as a member of the hermeneutic circle.
        - Preparation for group sessions; suggested activities and emergent research questions, materials, documentation, references, and others.
        - Transcribe recordings of group sessions

    - Review and revision of transcripts
    - Initial analysis and interpretation of data
    - Respond to participants inquiries and requests for information

- Initial Draft of the Dissertation:
  - July 1, 2002 – December 30, 2002 (26 weeks)

- Revisions to Draft Dissertation:
  - January 1, 2003 February 28, 2003 (9 weeks)

- Preparation Dissertation Defence:
  - March 1, 2003 – March 30, 2003 (4 weeks)

- Defense of Dissertation:
  - June 1, 2004 – June 30, 2004 (4 weeks)

## Appendix H

## Proposed Preliminary Reading List

Aitken, A., & Townsend, D. (1998). Lessons to be learned from the Alberta experience: Principals reactions to restructuring. *The Canadian Administrator*, 37 (6), 1-7.

Beane, J. A., & Apple, M. W. (1995). The case for democratic schools. In M.V. Apple and J. A. Beane (Eds.). *Democratic schools* (pp. 1–25). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Beck, L. G. & Murphy, J. (1996). *The four imperatives of a successful school*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press Inc.

Calabrese, Raymond L. & Barton, Angela M. (1994). The Principal: A leader in a democratic society. *National Association Secondary School Principals: Bulletin,* 78, 558.

Chion-Kenney, L. (1994). *Site-based management and decision making: Problems and solutions*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Henderson, J. G. & Hawthorne, R. D. (1995). *Transformative curriculum leadership*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.

Jacka, N. (1999). What Makes a Good School?: What is an Effective School? What is a Good School? Is there a Difference? [On-line]. Available: http://ceris.schoolnet.ca/e/GoodSchool1.html

Lezotte, L. W. (March 1985). Growing use of the effective schools model for school improvement. *Educational Leadership, 17*(6), 23-27.

Negroni, P. J., (2000, September), A radical role for superintendents. *The School Administrator*. 57 (8), 16-19.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2000). *The lifeworld of leadership: Creating culture, community, and personal meaning in our schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Sewall, A. M. (1999). *Central office and site-based management: An educator's guide*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Co. Inc.

Wendel, T. (2000). *Creating equity and quality*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Adancement of Excellence in Education.

Yanitski, N. W. (1998, April). *Site-Based Decision-Making in Schools*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, San Diego, CA.

# Appendix I

## Guiding Principles

Action research team members will be asked to engage in a discussion of principles that will govern the community of practice. I will propose a provisional statement of guiding principles that will be critiqued and negotiated by team members. I will propose the following provisional guiding principles:

- We acknowledge that we will work to create a community of practice.
- We acknowledge that we will operate on the principles of good faith, sincerity and mutual respect.
- We acknowledge that the principles of mutual recognition, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility shall apply to the proceedings and the processes of the action research team.
- Discussions will always respect the principles of ethical and honourable conduct.
- The action research team will approach the action research project as partners.
- The action research team shall demonstrate in their discussions and deliberations mutual respect for each other and for the action research process.
- The action research team shall be guided by candor and good faith in both oral and written documents.
- The action research team agrees to the sharing of information and expertise without undue restrictions.
- The action research team acknowledges the importance of respecting the distinct perspectives and understandings that team members bring to the action research project.